United Nations A/72/253

General Assembly

Distr.: General
31 July 2017

Original: English

Seventy-second session
Item 18 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Macroeconomic policy questions

External debt sustainability and development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared by the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/216, provides an analysis of the main trends of debt indicators in developing and transition economies for the post-crisis period 2009-2016 and presents the core drivers of continued and growing vulnerabilities to developing country debt sustainability in the context of persistent global economic instability and uncertainty. It provides an overview of current dominant policy direction and orientation to improve developing country debt sustainability in the context of increased efforts to reform development financing more widely, with a view to bridging large financing gaps to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The report calls attention to the need for extending debt management capacities to subnational governments to allow for more comprehensive and systematic debt data reporting, as well as minimize the dangers of hidden contingent liabilities.

* A/72/150.

17-13073 (E) 080817

Please recycle

I. Overview and trends

Evolution of core debt indicators, 2009-2016

1. Total external debt stocks of developing countries and economies in transition (henceforth developing countries) are estimated to have reached $7.1 trillion in 2016, an increase of 80 per cent since 2009, which represents an average annual growth rate of 8.78 per cent over the period. In 2016, 73 per cent of total debt was composed of long-term debt, a decline of 2 percentage points compared with 2009. During the same period, the share of short-term debt in total debt increased from 21 per cent in 2009 to 25 per cent in 2016.[1]

2. As gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates picked up in the post-crisis period, the debt-to-GDP ratio remained relatively constant in the eight years since then, with an average value of 24.3 per cent. The debt-to-exports ratio increased to 114.6 per cent in 2016, from 79.4 per cent in 2011. The ratio of debt service to exports reached a low of 8.7 per cent in 2011, climbed to a high of 12.9 per cent in 2015, but registered a small improvement to 12.3 per cent in 2016. The ratio of debt service to government revenue declined from 12.8 per cent in 2009 to 9.1 per cent in 2011 and has been fluctuating in the 10-12 per cent band ever since.

3. These averages are highly influenced by China, which accounted for 20 per cent of total debt stock of developing countries in 2016. That country's debt stock grew at an average of 18.4 per cent during the period 2009-2016, and when it is excluded from the group, the growth rate of total debt stocks for developing countries drops to 7.1 per cent for the period. Although the debt stock of China rose more rapidly than the average of all developing countries, so did its GDP and exports. As a result, the debt ratios of developing countries are higher when China is excluded, with the debt-to-GDP ratio standing at 35.7 per cent, the debt-to-exports ratio at 142 per cent, the ratio of debt service to exports at 17 per cent and the ratio of debt service to government revenue at 18 per cent in 2016.

4. International reserves for all developing countries increased from nearly $5 trillion in 2009 to $6.1 trillion in 2016, although they have fallen well off their peak of $7.1 trillion, reached in 2013. The average growth rate of international reserves for the post-crisis period 2009-2016 was 3 per cent, which is substantially below the growth rate of 26.5 per cent achieved in the 2000-2008 period. The combination of rising stocks of short-term debt and falling international reserves has led to a decline in the ratio of international reserves to short-term debt, from 591 per cent in 2009 to 343 per cent in 2016. Although still substantially higher than the 230 per cent coverage registered at the beginning of the millennium, the decline in that ratio over the past five years signals that attention should be paid to the evolution of short-term debt stocks in the coming years.

5. Total debt stocks in the least developed countries registered an average yearly growth rate of 6.4 per cent in the period 2009-2016, rising from $171 billion in 2009 to $263 billion in 2016. The composition of the debt has changed in the opposite direction of that for developing countries as a group, as the average yearly growth rate of long-term debt stocks surpassed that of short-term debt stocks by 6 percentage points. The share of long-term debt increased from 80 per cent of the group's total debt in 2009 to 86 per cent in 2016, while the share of short-term debt

[1] Total external debt stocks are composed of long-term debt, short-term debt and the use of credit from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which includes purchases and drawings under standby, extended, structural adjustment, enhanced structural adjustment and systemic transformation facility agreements, as well as trust fund loans and special drawing rights allocations. Discrepancies in overall percentage figures for short- and long-term debt stocks arise from the use of IMF credits (see also annex, footnote b, to the present report).

in total external debt declined from 12 per cent in 2009 to 8 per cent in 2016. The ratio of total debt to GDP declined from 29.3 per cent in 2006 to 27 per cent in 2016, the debt-to-exports ratio increased from 81 per cent in 2011 to 136 per cent in 2016, while the ratio of debt service to exports deteriorated progressively from 2011 to 2016 to reach 9.6 per cent, which is well below the average for all developing countries, as the group is still reaping the benefits of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. The ratio of debt service to government revenue increased from 7.6 per cent in 2009 to 12.7 per cent in 2016, and the ratio of international reserves to short-term debt registered an improvement, moving from 430 per cent to 567 per cent.

6. In the least developed countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the ratio of total debt to GDP remained flat throughout the 2009-2016 period, but the evolution of other debt indicators is somewhat worrying. The debt-to-exports ratio doubled from a low of 68.5 per cent in 2011 to 143 per cent in 2016, the debt service-to-exports ratio worsened substantially from 3.5 per cent in 2011 to 12.6 per cent in 2016, and the debt service-to-government revenue ratio reached a period high of 17 per cent in 2016, after being just under 5 per cent in 2011.

7. Total debt stocks in small island developing States continued to grow at an average rate of 13 per cent during 2009-2016, the second-highest rate of growth after the East Asia and the Pacific group. Long-term debt grew faster than short-term debt, resulting in the increase of the share of long-term debt in total debt stocks from 71 per cent in 2009 to 78 per cent in 2016. The debt-to-GDP ratio increased from 34 per cent in 2009 to 57 per cent in 2016, and the ratio of debt to exports rose from 93 per cent to 160 per cent. The debt service-to-exports ratio deteriorated markedly during the period, increasing from 11.5 per cent in 2009 to 25 per cent in 2016, while the ratio of debt service to government revenue increased from 18 per cent to 43 per cent during the period. International reserves in the region reached $34 billion in 2016, but the ratio of reserves to short-term debt declined from a high of 344 per cent in 2010 to 215 per cent in 2016, which is the lowest of any of the regions.

8. Total debt stocks in commodity-dependent countries grew at an average rate of 8.3 per cent during 2009-2016, in line with the average of the developing countries as a group. Most of the external debt stock is composed of long-term debt, reaching 85 per cent in 2016, which is an increase of 5 percentage points compared with 2009. Short-term debt as a share of the external debt stock decreased from 16 per cent in 2009 to 13 per cent in 2016. The collapse in commodity prices during the period 2012-2015 had a considerable impact on the group's debt indicators as the debt-to-GDP ratio increased from a low of 2.4 per cent in 2011 to 4.3 per cent in 2016, the debt-to-exports ratio almost doubled from 87 per cent to 178 per cent during the same period, the ratio of debt service to exports deteriorated from 10 per cent in 2011 to 25 per cent in 2016, and the ratio of debt service to government revenue rose from 9 per cent in 2011 to 19.5 per cent in 2016. The negative trend in ratios is also evident in the ratio of international reserves to short-term debt, which declined to 424 per cent in 2016 after reaching a high of 539 per cent in 2012.

9. In developing country petroleum exporters, the total debt stock grew at a yearly average rate of 7.3 per cent between 2009 and 2016. The period started with the debt-to-GDP ratio at 24.2 per cent, and the ratio touched a low of 19.5 per cent in 2011 and increased to 27 per cent by 2016. The same trend is evident in the debt-to-exports ratio, which more than doubled from 62 per cent in 2011 to 154.4 per cent in 2016. The oil price slump in 2014 caused the ratio of debt service to exports to increase steeply, from 13 per cent in 2013 to 26.4 per cent in 2016. As government budgets experienced lower oil-related revenues, the ratio of debt service to government revenue increased from 16 per cent in 2013 to 31.3 per cent in 2016,

which is three times higher than the figure for developing countries as a group. While the ratio of international reserves to short-term debt for the subgroup is almost double that for all developing countries, the need to use reserves to shore up domestic economies has led to a decline of 13 per cent in that ratio over the 2013-2016 period.

Official development assistance

10. In 2016 the net official development assistance (ODA) from members of the Development Assistance Committee reached its highest level to date at $146.2 billion,[2] from $131.5 billion in 2015. The increase in ODA from 2015 to 2016 represented an 8.9 per cent rise in real terms. As a percentage of gross national income (GNI), ODA reached 0.32, marking the highest ratio since 2005. This continues a long-term rising trend in ODA, amounting to 83 per cent in real terms between 2000 and 2015.

11. The increase in ODA in 2016 is driven in part by the large increase in ODA for in-donor refugee costs, which rose from $12.1 billion to $15.4 billion from 2015 to 2016, increasing from 9.2 per cent to 10.8 per cent of net ODA (an increase of 27.5 per cent in real terms). Other factors driving the increase in ODA include a substantial rise in net debt relief from $431 million in 2015 to $2.5 billion in 2016 due to exceptional debt relief delivered to Cuba. In addition, ODA allocated to humanitarian aid increased by 8 per cent in 2016 over 2015, to $14.4 billion.

12. Bilateral grants rose by 6 per cent, excluding aid for in-donor refugee costs. However, there is considerable concern over the continued downward trend of delivering aid to the poorest countries. For example, in 2016 net loans to developing countries declined by 4 per cent in real terms. Net ODA to Africa in 2016 declined by 0.5 per cent in real terms, to $27 billion, of which $24 billion was allocated to sub-Saharan Africa, representing a fall of 0.7 per cent from 2015 to 2016. In addition, bilateral net ODA to the least developed countries contracted by 3.9 per cent in real terms, to $24 billion. That trend is particularly worrisome, as the least developed countries rely heavily on ODA, which makes up more than two thirds of their external financing.

13. The increase in net ODA is a welcome development in the light of the considerable increase in financing requirements to pursue the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, while the increase in ODA is positive, it falls short of the 0.7 per cent commitment made by the members of the Development Assistance Committee.[3] Had all Committee donors delivered 0.7 per cent of their GNI, total ODA for the group would have amounted to $316.4 billion in 2016.[4] The 2016 net and gross levels of ODA fall short of that amount by $173.8 billion and $161.5 billion, respectively. Although the amount of ODA delivered by Committee members remains a modest sum compared with the financing gap for the Sustainable Development Goals, estimated at $2.5 trillion per annum[5] for developing countries, fully meeting the 0.7 per cent threshold for ODA would constitute a significant source of additional external financing for developing countries.

[2] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "Development aid rises again in 2016", 11 April 2017. Available from www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-data/ODA-2016-detailed-summary.pdf.

[3] Six countries, namely Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, either met or exceeded that target in 2015.

[4] Based on the calculations of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) using OECD 2016 ODA and GNI estimates.

[5] *World Investment Report 2014* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.14.II.D.1). Available from http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/wir2014_en.pdf.

II. Macroeconomic challenges to debt sustainability for developing countries

14. In a global economic environment characterized by persistent uncertainty and volatility and continued sluggish recovery in many developed countries, stable and, on average, low debt-to-GDP ratios in developing countries as a group provide little ground for reassurance. Not only have debt-to-GDP ratios varied considerably within the group, but rising trends in the ratios of debt to exports and to government revenue, as well as of debt service to exports, in particular in some of the least developed countries and some small island developing States, point to a more problematic picture. In June 2017, only 11 low-income countries were considered at low risk of debt default by IMF and the World Bank. Four countries were considered to be in debt distress, an additional 21 countries at high risk of debt distress, compared with 13 countries in April 2015, and a further 31 at medium risk of debt default.[6]

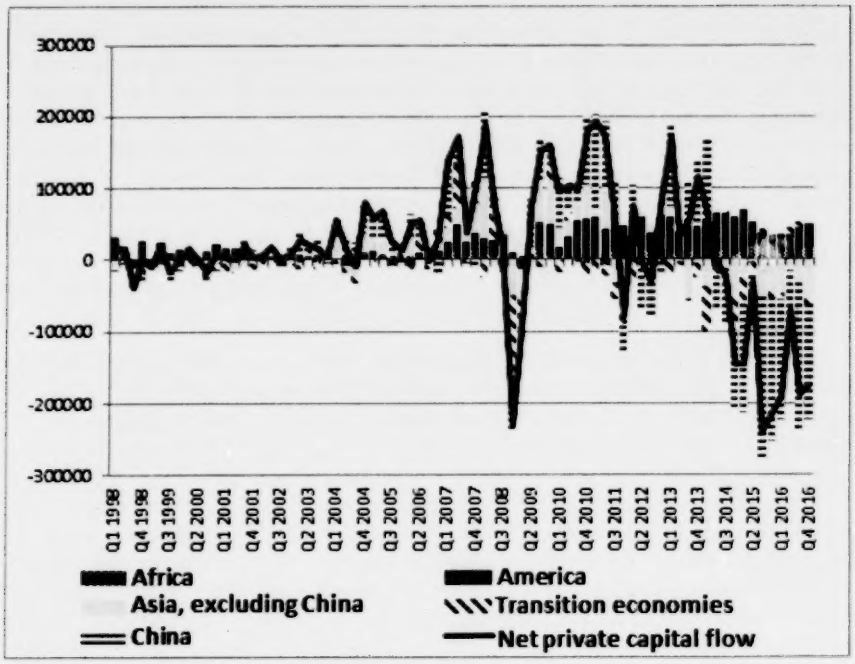
15. This is all the more concerning, given that the global macroeconomic environment remains little conducive to improved prospects of debt sustainability in developing countries in the near future. According to the latest estimates of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), global output decelerated to 2.2 per cent in 2016, from 2.6 per cent experienced in both 2014 and 2015. A number of large emerging economies, in particular, suffered setbacks, registering weak or negative growth. Meanwhile, global trade continued to disappoint, growing at about 1.3 per cent over the year in volume terms but marked by a general decline during the first half of 2016. Although the overall outlook for the global economy has been slightly more optimistic since the start of 2017,[7] there remains uncertainty about the longer-term sustainability of that growth momentum, in particular since that bout of market optimism appears to be more the product of short-term financial herding than a measured response to a more robust global growth path.

16. The overall trend towards negative net private capital flows continues to pose a core challenge for developing economies. Net private capital flows to developing countries entered negative territory in mid-2014 and have remained negative since, despite slight improvements (see figure I). While outflows from China have dominated that trend, in particular until 2016, other developing regions are also affected by net negative capital flows or declining positive inflows. The only exception is the African region, where the relatively stable positive net capital flows are driven largely by foreign direct investment, historically delinked from shorter-term macroeconomic dynamics. Negative net private capital flows to developing countries remain a core concern in particular, in view of the expected full return to a normalized monetary and interest rate policy in the United States of America and concomitant increases in United States interest rates.

[6] See the list of low-income country debt sustainability analyses for countries eligible for Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust funding as at 1 June 2017. Available from www.imf.org/external/Pubs/ft/dsa/DSAlist.pdf.

[7] IMF, *World Economic Outlook* (Washington, D.C., April 2017).

Figure I
Net private capital flows by developing regions, 1998-2016
(Millions of United States dollars)

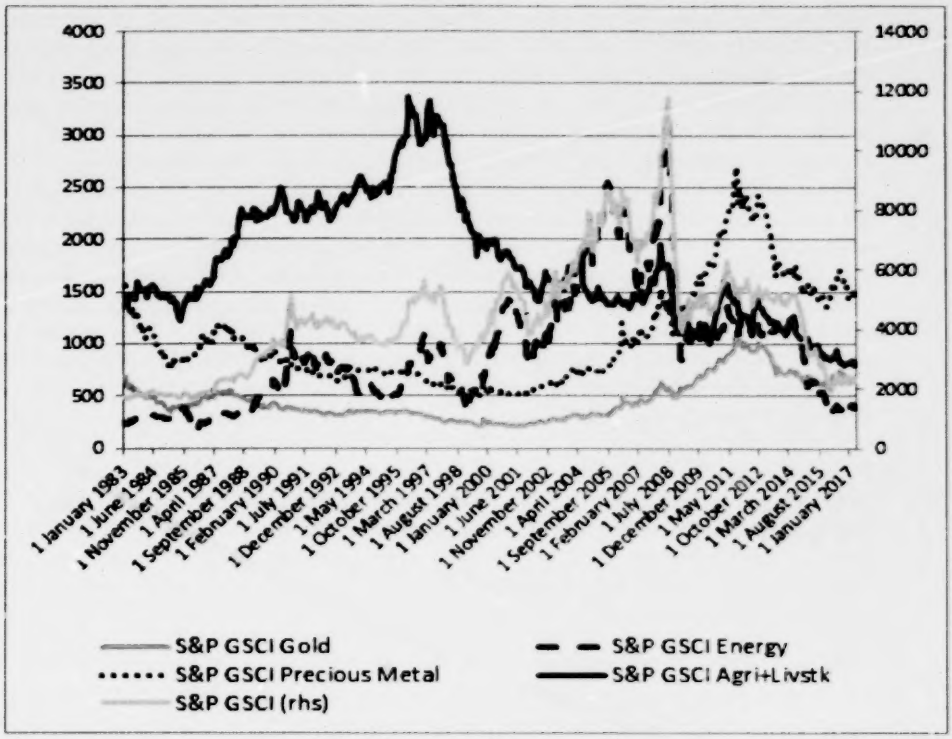


Source: UNCTAD secretariat calculations based on the IMF Balance of Payments database and information from national central banks.

Note: The samples of economies by country group are as follows: transition economies: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation and Ukraine; Africa: Botswana, Cabo Verde, Egypt, Ghana, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan and Uganda; Latin America: Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of); Asia, excluding China: Hong Kong (China), India, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey and Viet Nam.

17. Of further concern, in particular for commodity-exporting developing countries, are continued low commodity prices. All indications point to commodity prices only slowly recovering from their earlier very low levels, and in some cases not recovering at all. In real terms, commodity prices globally are at the levels of the late 1980s, albeit with major variations in the dynamics of the different commodity groups. In particular, agricultural commodities are at one of their lowest levels since the creation of the index in 1970. The only group of commodities currently performing above 1980s price levels are precious metals, including gold, silver and platinum. With persistently low levels of aggregate global demand, expectations of a sustained improvement of commodity price levels over the coming months would clearly be premature.

Figure II
Commodity indices in real terms, 1983-2017



Source: UNCTAD secretariat calculations and Thomson Reuters.

18. Those exogenous constraints are likely to accentuate growing risks for developing country debt sustainability arising from the changing composition of developing country debt.[8] Over the past two decades, a growing share of developing country debt, both public and private, has been refinanced in international financial markets, considerably increasing their risk exposure to volatile investor sentiments and short-term expectations in those markets. In terms of sovereign debt, the share of external public and publicly guaranteed debt owed to private creditors increased from 41 per cent in 2000 to just over 62 per cent in 2016, remaining stable compared with 2015. With the drying up since 2014 of cheap private credit to developing countries (see figure I) resulting in steep yield increases on international sovereign bonds in some cases, in addition to the high exchange rate risk associated with debt issuance in foreign currency, many Governments in developing countries have relied more strongly on domestic public debt, issued in local currency. However, that strategy comes with its own risks, such as inflationary pressures and maturity mismatches, arising from the prohibitive costs of long-term government securities in most developing countries. In addition, where foreign investors hold large positions in domestic bond markets, exposure to volatile global financial and economic conditions and fickle investor confidence in host markets still remains high.

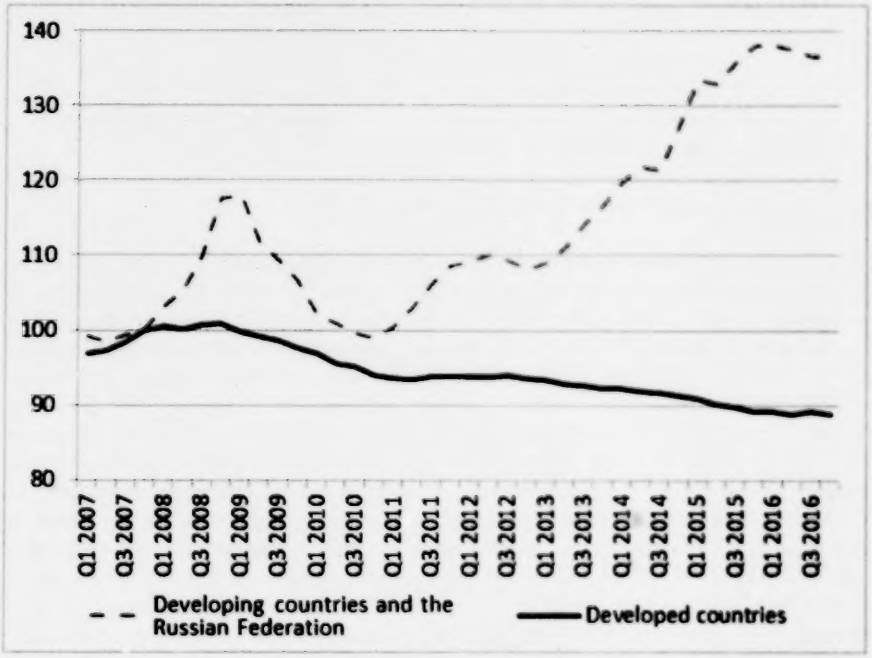
19. In large developing economies and emerging markets, private sector non-financial debt, reaching over 140 per cent of combined GDP in 2016, and

[8] For a detailed discussion of those risks, see the previous report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/71/276).

concomitant rising debt service ratios also continue to be a major concern for external debt sustainability in those economies. Figure III shows the evolution of debt service ratios of private non-financial sectors in those and in advanced countries between 2007 and 2016. With the exception of South Africa, not only is the debt service ratio currently higher in large developing and emerging economies, compared with levels prior to the global financial crisis, but the trend is also overwhelmingly rising. Most of the rising debt service ratios are attributable to increases in corporate indebtedness contracted mostly, with the exception of China, in international financial markets and in foreign currency. Rising household debt at the moment poses a more serious problem only in some East and South-East Asian economies. That trend is worrying, since debt service ratios are an early warning indicator of banking crises due to non-performing loans, with high debt service ratios also usually affecting consumption and investment negatively. In addition, private non-financial sectors in low-income countries have also seen a rise in external financing. According to the World Bank, in those economies the share of private non-guaranteed debt in total external debt increased from 0.37 per cent in 2000 to 3.59 per cent in 2015.[9]

Figure III

Debt service ratios in the private non-financial sector, selected developed and developing countries, 2007-2016 (index numbers, Q4 2007 = 100)



Source: UNCTAD secretariat calculations based on information from the Bank for International Settlements.

Note: The figure shows average values for developing and transition countries (Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Malaysia, Russian Federation, South Africa, Thailand and Turkey) and for developed countries (France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America).

20. That combination of a problematic global economic environment and higher risk exposure due to longer-term shifts in developing country debt compositions has

[9] World Bank International Debt Statistics 2017.

been driving the deterioration of developing country external debt sustainability for some time. This raises the question of whether short and procyclical credit booms, which by their very nature are not easily channelled into productive long-term investment projects, can make up for the potential costs of rising risk exposure, in particular in developing countries with as yet shallow financial systems at home. The alternative is the emergence of a new debt trap for developing countries: once reversals of capital flows and worsening financial conditions set in, systemic failure in the private sectors leads to heavy additional debt burdens on public balance sheets, including bailout payments. Even if an outright financial meltdown can be avoided, private lenders are less obliging than other Governments when it comes to considering trade-offs between longer-term growth prospects and immediate repayment. Harsh austerity responses are therefore likely, further undermining growth prospects and ultimately driving up relative debt levels. To avoid such debt trap from systematically spreading across the developing world, coordinated policy responses are required.

III. Current international policy initiatives to mitigate developing country debt vulnerabilities: main directions

State-contingent debt instruments

21. Recent initiatives by the international community to improve developing country debt sustainability have focused primarily on the prevention of debt crises. This includes renewed interest in debt instruments that help to mitigate exogenous shocks to developing economies, in particular State-contingent debt instruments.[10] These are financial instruments whose pay-offs are contractually linked to a State variable (such as GDP or inflation) or to a trigger event (such as a natural disaster or a health epidemic). Since such instruments are designed to provide a countercyclical and risk-sharing function, they are, in principle, particularly useful in mitigating debt sustainability problems arising from the kind of short cheap credit booms experienced by developing countries in the recent past, as well as other exogenous shocks, so long as their nature can be predefined in the contractual arrangements.

22. The most important potential benefit of State-contingent debt instruments for borrowing countries is the stabilization of overall government spending, which helps to preserve fiscal space in times of crises. Insofar as such instruments are also a vehicle for risk sharing between debtors and creditors and such risk sharing helps to reduce the likelihood of costly defaults and debt crises, both debtors and creditors benefit in the long run. An example is GDP-linked bonds, which link debt payments directly to the GDP growth rate or level of the issuing countries, thereby providing Governments with a break on their debt service obligations in bad times in exchange for increased debt service obligations in better times. IMF suggests that switching to local currency and GDP-linked bonds can therefore help to increase the debt limits (i.e. the debt level beyond which fiscal solvency is in doubt) in developing countries.[11] Other research by the Bank of England shows that if GDP-indexed bonds had been issued by Mexico before the 1995 tequila crisis, it would have reduced the Government's interest bill by almost 2 per cent of GDP.[12]

---

[10] See, for the most recent example, IMF, "State-contingent debt instruments for sovereigns — annexes", Policy Paper (Washington, D.C., May 2017). Available from https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2017/05/19/pp032317state-contingent-debt-instruments-for-sovereigns.

[11] Ibid.

[12] See www.bankofengland.co.uk/research/Documents/conferences/gdplinkedbonds.pdf.

23. State-contingent extendible bonds function differently in that they automatically provide maturities extension or a debt service standstill in times of liquidity crises. This can help to generate "temporary financing" and prevent liquidity issues from escalating into a full-blown and costly debt crisis. There are many other types of State-contingent debt instruments, such as output-, revenue- or inflation-linked instruments, countercyclical loans, commodity-linked instruments and catastrophe insurance, that target different types of vulnerabilities of sovereign debt sustainability.

24. The main challenge for State-contingent debt instruments is the difficulty of establishing investor confidence therein, with so far only limited take-up by creditors, so that markets for such instruments are either highly illiquid or non-existent. Additional concerns relate to moral hazard risks and data quality and transparency. IMF suggests that at least some of the problems can be addressed through the refined pricing and designing of such instruments to achieve an acceptable balance of risk for both investors and issuers.

25. If this could be achieved, State-contingent debt instruments would certainly strengthen market-based approaches to addressing debt sustainability issues through debt crisis prevention. Other market-based solutions, such as collective action and pari passu clauses in sovereign bond contracts, also focus on refinements to international bond contracts but do so from the perspective primarily of facilitating the resolution of sovereign debt crises once they occur, and in particular by discouraging non-cooperative holdout strategies in sovereign debt restructurings.

Promoting responsible financing through "soft law"

26. Another policy focus of the international community has been the promotion of "soft law" principles to encourage responsible sovereign lending and borrowing, including the UNCTAD principles for responsible sovereign lending and borrowing (2012), the Basic Principles on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes, adopted by the General Assembly in 2015 in its resolution 69/319, and the operational guidelines for sustainable financing of the Group of 20 (2017).

27. Such principles and guidelines provide normative frameworks for best practice in sovereign lending and borrowing, based on the application of established general international legal norms and custom, such as transparency, legitimacy, impartiality, good faith and sustainability,[13] to the governance of sovereign debt and debt sustainability issues. The primary objective is to broaden consensus on what constitutes responsible behaviour by both creditors and debtors to reduce incidences of sovereign debt crises, as well as to promote shared responsibilities, a more transparent process and fairer and more efficient outcomes for debt crisis resolution.

28. Soft-law approaches have the potential to increase the developmental impact of sovereign borrowing while reducing its risks and costs, by setting standards for the constructive behaviour of actors participating in sovereign lending and borrowing, delineating their roles and providing guidance for improved institutional governance of sovereign debt. They can also promote a more holistic understanding of sovereign debt sustainability criteria, as well as of the objectives of sovereign workout processes when those become necessary, by emphasizing the need to consider not only immediate burden sharing between creditors and debtors to address short-term liquidity problems but also the explicit consideration of the

[13] For a detailed discussion of these principles, see Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky and Matthias Goldmann, eds., Yale Journal of International Law, special ed. on sovereign debt, vol. 41, No. 2 (Fall 2016). Available from https://campuspress.yale.edu/yjil/files/2016/10/YJIL-Online-Special-Edition-Sovereign-Debt-Full-File-tl8u6b.pdf.

longer-term social, economic and environmental implications of sovereign debt financing and debt restructurings.

29. Since the use of soft-law principles and guidelines has the benefit of being voluntary, and therefore based on the consensual agreement of sovereign borrowers and their creditors, as well as negotiated in advance of any risk of insolvency, the bar for their adoption is relatively low. However, to be effective in the prevention of systemic debt crises, widespread adoption and systematic implementation are essential, but remain uncertain, as well as difficult to monitor. There are a number of different, but in principle complementary, methods to enhance the effective implementation of normative frameworks and best practice guides. They could be incorporated in advance into contract choice-of-law clauses for sovereign debt bonds; coordinated efforts could be stepped up to facilitate their dissemination and the build-up of national institutional and regulatory mechanisms for systematic implementation; and adjudicative bodies (i.e. domestic courts or arbitral tribunals) could take such guidelines into consideration in their own actions and decision-making.

Reforming official development assistance and new solutions for development financing

30. At least partly in response to increased financing requirements to meet the Sustainable Development Goals, the use of blended finance and related new financing instruments has been widely promoted, including through the Sustainable Development Goals financial innovation platform launched in October 2016 by the former Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon. The objective is to use conventional bilateral and multilateral development finance with a strategic view to facilitating the mobilization of private capital into investment projects with a high developmental impact.[14] Blended finance instruments are wide-ranging and not always entirely new, and include public-private partnership, public guarantees, "impact investing", syndicated loans, and shares in collective investment vehicles, to name a few.

31. To track such additional financing, OECD has spearheaded the development of a new metric, total official support for sustainable development, which aims to measure all external financial flows from traditional and emerging donors (public, private or blended, and concessional or non-concessional) that are delivered to support global public goods and sustainable development in developing countries. The related statistical framework seeks to support target 17.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources). The new framework is intended to complement existing statistics provided by Development Assistance Committee donors, rather than to replace ODA, and has yet to be finalized and refined. It seeks to measure donors' gross contributions relative to the financing needs of recipient countries. Much work remains to be done in terms of setting statistical classifications and boundaries, ensuring the compatibility of new and existing relevant statistical databases and identifying eligible countries, sectors and organizations to ensure that data are relevant, comparable and sound.[15]

32. In the course of ongoing publications[16] on the new framework, a number of concerns were raised. Most of them focus on the transparency of the framework and

[14] See World Economic Forum and OECD, "Blended finance vol. 1: a primer for development finance and philanthropic funders — an overview of the strategic use of development finance and philanthropic funds to mobilize private capital for development", September 2015.

[15] See OECD, "TOSSD: a new statistical measure for the SDG era", October 2016. Available from www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/tossd.htm.

[16] See www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/tossd-public-consultation.htm.

on clear and separate accounting of the longer-term costs and benefits of different types of financial flows and financing instruments and their true developmental impact. A specific concern in this regard relates to concerns about the continued "additionality" of conventional ODA and the potential risk of donor countries downsizing their aid allocations by replacing ODA with other forms of financing under the aforementioned framework, thereby further undermining compliance with the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of GNI for ODA. In addition, critiques have pointed to the broad scope of the financial flows under the framework more generally, arguing that this dilutes the core economic functions of development finance and the focus on Sustainable Development Goals delivery by diverting development finance into related, but also much wider, areas, such as conflict resolution.

33. While these are, of course, not the only policy initiatives to mitigate debt sustainability vulnerabilities and facilitate development financing — others include the ongoing review of the IMF Debt Sustainability Framework and IMF initiatives that facilitate access to debt relief and allow lending into arrears in very specific circumstances — they describe the scope of current policy direction and orientation that address sovereign debt sustainability issues in the context of increased financing requirements to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. Whether the emphasis on market-based approaches and the strategic use of development finance to mobilize private capital will be sufficient to avoid the rapid spread of the current debt trap for developing countries remains to be seen. The danger at present is of a mismatch between very gradual, largely market-based reforms of debt and financing instruments, on the one hand, and the growing urgency of sovereign debt vulnerabilities and distress in developing countries, on the other. Thus, as pointed out, liquid markets for State-contingent debt instruments are far from emerging in sufficient scope and breadth. Meanwhile, recent evidence shows that the increase in the corporate debt of emerging and large developing countries has not been used to finance productive activities but has instead been channelled mostly into very few sectors with an, at best, ambiguous impact on long-term productivity and transformational investment.[17] In addition, an OECD survey of blended finance instruments found that they had mobilized an estimated $36.4 billion of private capital over three years (2010-2014), a far cry from the estimated annual financing gap for the Sustainable Development Goals of $2.5 trillion.

IV. Debt management: strengthening capacity in subnational governments

34. By contrast, it is uncontentious that more complex compositions of public debt in developing countries have reinforced the need for strong institutional and human capacity for debt management. Debt management offices need to be effective in fulfilling their reporting obligations and in providing decision makers with the information required for the formulation of critical financial policies. Debt management must also be supported by appropriate legal and institutional frameworks and be fully integrated within the broader public finance management system. When effective, public debt management significantly contributes to improvements in financial sustainability, transparency and good governance.

35. Developing countries have generally strengthened their capacity to oversee and analyse their debt portfolios over the period, although the rate of progress differs greatly between countries.[18] However, the growing recognition of the need

[17] *Trade and Development Report 2016* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.II.D.5), chap. V.
[18] For more details, see A/70/278, sect. VI.

for Governments to take a holistic approach to debt sustainability in their countries has reinforced awareness of the importance of debt management for governments at the subnational level, in particular. Moreover, the trend towards decentralization of debt management from the central Government to subnational governments, aligned with increased fiscal authority, has focused attention on the capacity of the latter to manage their liabilities.

36. Any subnational government that has the capacity to incur debt must also have the capacity to manage that debt effectively. However, the specific capacity that such governments need for effective debt management will depend on a number of factors. The intergovernmental framework of the country will have important implications for debt management at the subnational level. While the types of legislation differ between countries, in federal systems the second tier of government will often have more freedom to determine its borrowing frameworks than in unitary systems where the central Government would normally establish the regulatory framework for borrowing by subnational governments. Notwithstanding the different degrees of autonomy, it is essential that a legal framework exist that clearly defines the scope of the subnational government to borrow, the rules governing borrowing, and reporting obligations. Another significant factor is the size of the subnational government in terms of incurred debt; small subnational governments may not have one principal debt management entity but instead combine debt management functions with other related functions. In such cases, coordination between the different entities is critical. The size of the subnational government will also determine the need for coordination with the fiscal and monetary policies and debt sustainability strategies of the central Government. Other important factors are the fact that subnational governments typically borrow from banks, normally commercial, and do not borrow from the domestic capital market or pursue market development.

37. While the capacity of subnational governments to manage their debt varies from entity to entity, and indeed from country to country, there are important commonalities. As the size of public debt has increased at the subnational level and the composition of debt portfolios has become more complex, subnational governments in general are conscious of the need to strengthen the effectiveness of their debt management, and many are making substantial progress in doing so. There is a marked lack of information about the current status of debt management capacity in developing countries; however, anecdotal evidence suggests that many subnational governments in those countries face considerable challenges to managing their debt portfolios effectively. Progress made at the level of the central Government in strengthening capacity to oversee and analyse its debt portfolios does not seem to have been replicated at the subnational level in a number of countries.

38. Although many of the challenges are similar to those encountered by central Governments, particularly those with weak debt management functions, some are specific to subnational governments, and others are frequently more acute. Subnational governments often lack the legal and institutional frameworks necessary for effective debt management, and a large number have not yet established an adequately resourced debt management office. The problems of lack of competencies and high turnover among debt management office staff are in many cases more acute than in the central Government. In terms of upstream debt management, the major weaknesses tend to be in the formulation of debt strategy and in risk management. For downstream debt management, a common problem is incomplete or inaccurate debt data, often associated with the absence of a computerized debt recording and management system; while spreadsheet systems suffice for subnational governments with very low quantities of debt, a more

sophisticated system is essential for most entities. Debt reporting is another critical area in which many subnational governments lack the required capacity. Unlike the central Government, the subnational government would not normally be expected to report to international institutions, such as the World Bank; however, a major problem is that many fail to meet their obligations to report to the central Government. One of the challenges faced by many subnational governments is that they do not have strong technological skills or telecommunications infrastructures and therefore have difficulty in managing such systems. Operational risk management is also a common area of weakness, characterized by the absence of controls and documented procedures for debt transactions. As with the central Government, the subnational debt management system should ideally be linked electronically to the other public finance management systems, but such is frequently not the case.

39. In the post-2015 environment, it is critical for both the local and central governments that subnational governments build the capacity that they need to manage their debt effectively. They need to have appropriate legal and institutional frameworks, as well as the staffing, skills and systems needed to meet the challenges that they face. Central Governments should ensure that governance structures and regulatory frameworks reflect the country's particular situation and clearly define the level of autonomy and scope for borrowing given to subnational governments. The central Government and the international community should assist subnational governments in their efforts to build sustainable capacity, initially with particular attention to debt data recording and reporting, to ensure the availability of information needed for policymaking and risk management. Given the broad consensus that technical assistance has been a major contributing factor in improving debt management capacity at the level of the central Government, it is proposed that providers of technical assistance in debt management also provide valuable support to subnational governments in building sustainable capacity to meet international standards. Such support should cover both upstream and downstream activities. The upstream activities include diagnosis, designing reform plans, medium-term debt strategy formulation and debt sustainability analysis, of which the principal providers are the World Bank and IMF, in partnership with a number of other international and regional organizations, to a large extent through the Debt Management Facility. Downstream activities cover the provision of debt management systems, maintenance of debt databases, debt data validation, debt operations, internal and external debt reporting, debt statistics and basic debt analysis and are provided mainly by the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System Programme of UNCTAD and by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

40. There are a number of critical success factors for the improvement of debt management capacity in subnational governments. Central Governments should ensure that the legal and institutional frameworks appropriate to the country's situation are in place. Capacity-building should be customized to take account of the specific characteristics of subnational debt in each country. Providers of technical assistance should work in cooperation with the central Government and with each other to avoid duplication and maximize economies of scale; Argentina, where the United Nations and the central Government established a partnership to support debt management in a number of provinces, is a clear example of the benefits that can be achieved through such cooperation. Priority should be given to assisting countries in which national solvency and liquidity vulnerabilities related to subnational debt are highest. Lastly, adequate financing from the international community will be needed in many cases to support reforms and the provision of technical assistance.

V. Conclusions and policy recommendations

41. The overall outlook on external debt sustainability in developing countries is worsening. While GDP-to-debt ratios remain stable and low by historical standards, this conceals both large and growing variations between developing countries and the effects of continued high exposure to market risks due to changes in debt compositions and fast integration into international financial markets. In the context of sluggish global economic and trade growth, sustained net negative capital flows to developing countries, flat commodity prices with few or no signs of speedy recovery, an expected tightening of monetary policies in developed countries, and instances of debt distress or high risk thereof in developing countries are likely to spread further.

42. Current main policy initiatives at the international level to bolster developing country debt sustainability and mobilize additional resources for development finance, while welcome and useful, may prove too gradual to contain the danger of a new debt trap closing in on a growing number of developing countries, in particular if global economic conditions remain unchanged. In addition, coordinated and more proactive international policy action is required to provide alleviation from acute debt distress, minimize contagion and ensure fair and efficient sovereign debt workouts. Further analysis of options for immediate international policy coordination and enhanced debt relief mechanisms should be considered, with input from major institutional stakeholders, including IMF, the World Bank and UNCTAD, in accordance with their respective mandates.

43. Further improvements in debt data availability, quality and country coverage, in particular on different debt components and debt financing instruments, remain an urgent priority, not only to better assess the short- and long-term sustainability of developing country debt but also to improve debt management strategies and facilitate sovereign debt restructurings. Similarly, more substantial analyses of the effectiveness of blended finance tools in mobilizing private capital for long-term productive investment in developing countries will be important, to ensure that such tools mitigate rather than increase risks to developing country debt sustainability. Clear definitions of different types of concessional and non-concessional, public, private and blended financing instruments will be important, to ensure that ODA commitments are not further undermined and the use of ODA for core economic development purposes is not diluted. Further analysis of options for an enhanced approach to blended finance and international development cooperation that can be operationalized should be considered, with input from the major institutional stakeholders, including IMF, the World Bank and UNCTAD, in accordance with their respective mandates.

44. Lastly, the strengthening of debt management capacities in developing countries remains essential to improved debt sustainability, including through improved debt data coverage and quality. Extending such capacities more systematically to subnational governments in developing countries should be a priority, to ensure more comprehensive data reporting and to minimize the dangers of hidden contingent liabilities in a context of increased decentralization of debt management in many developing countries.

Annex

External debt of developing countries

(Billions of United States dollars)

	All developing countries[a] and countries with economies in transition					*Sub-Saharan Africa*				
	2009-2016	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016[b]*	*2009-2016*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016[b]*
Total external debt stocks[c]	6 005.5	6 804.7	7 257.7	6 863.5	7 101.3	365.2	387.3	410.2	426.3	465.7
Long-term debt	4 199.1	4 579.0	4 916.4	4 922.4	5 205.4	292.8	309.2	334.7	349.0	385.8
Short-term debt	1 669.6	2 094.5	2 224.6	1 824.6	1 776.5	51.6	56.1	55.1	57.9	58.1
Debt service	681.9	721.6	800.2	840.5	763.4	25.2	32.2	32.6	29.1	30.0
International reserves	6 259.8	7 079.6	6 986.6	6 357.3	6 092.1	184.0	209.8	195.1	174.7	164.8
Debt indicators (percentage)[d]										
Debt service/exports[e]	10.8	10.0	10.9	12.9	12.3	6.1	6.8	6.9	8.1	9.1
Total debt/exports	93.9	93.9	98.8	105.5	114.6	89.4	81.9	86.6	119.3	141.3
Debt service/GDP	2.8	2.6	2.8	3.1	2.8	1.7	1.9	1.9	1.8	2.0
Total debt/GDP	24.3	24.9	25.7	25.6	26.3	24.5	23.2	23.6	26.9	30.6
Debt service/government revenue	10.6	9.8	10.7	12.0	11.1	8.3	9.4	9.5	10.2	12.0
Reserves/short-term debt	395.2	338.1	314.1	348.5	343.0	366.4	379.5	359.5	305.9	287.5

	Middle East and North Africa					*Latin America and the Caribbean*				
	2009-2016	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016[b]*	*2009-2016*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016[b]*
Total external debt stocks[c]	181.7	190.9	189.4	197.5	208.1	1 561.7	1 691.8	1 864.7	1 879.8	1 948.1
Long-term debt	136.1	148.5	142.8	149.9	154.5	1 283.2	1 384.4	1 538.9	1 564.7	1 634.0
Short-term debt	36.0	32.9	36.4	36.8	40.3	254.1	281.2	301.4	292.1	296.3
Debt service	18.2	16.9	19.1	18.8	20.0	210.5	224.5	220.5	260.8	269.5
International reserves	401.9	431.5	428.1	393.0	365.0	758.6	817.8	844.7	799.3	818.9
Debt indicators (percentage)[d]										
Debt service/exports[e]	5.8	4.6	5.9	7.3	7.7	19.3	18.1	18.2	24.8	26.4
Total debt/exports	57.9	51.8	58.1	76.2	79.8	142.0	136.5	153.7	178.3	190.4
Debt service/GDP	1.5	1.3	1.5	1.6	1.7	3.9	3.7	3.6	4.9	5.2
Total debt/GDP	15.0	14.5	15.0	16.6	17.5	28.7	28.1	30.7	35.6	37.4
Debt service/government revenue	6.9	6.5	6.9	7.7	8.6	14.0	12.8	13.1	18.6	20.1
Reserves/short-term debt	1 123.7	1 310.7	1 175.2	1 066.8	905.0	301.7	290.6	280.0	273.6	276.2

	East Asia and the Pacific					*South Asia*				
	2009-2016	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016[b]*	*2009-2016*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016[b]*
Total external debt stocks[c]	1 916.6	2 261.0	2 612.4	2 273.8	2 343.7	532.3	569.7	607.2	637.1	677.7
Long-term debt	905.4	942.2	1 136.7	1 135.4	1 254.7	423.0	444.5	489.3	521.3	555.5
Short-term debt	991.5	1 298.5	1 456.7	1 120.1	1 070.7	91.8	109.2	103.3	100.6	106.0
Debt service	152.3	156.3	172.0	231.3	177.2	50.6	51.0	106.5	57.3	61.2
International reserves	3 786.2	4 413.4	4 414.5	3 889.7	3 621.3	368.8	345.4	385.5	424.9	436.6
Debt indicators (percentage)[d]										
Debt service/exports[e]	5.1	4.6	4.8	6.8	5.5	10.0	9.2	19.2	11.4	11.7
Total debt/exports	62.8	67.3	73.5	66.9	72.9	108.1	102.8	109.3	126.4	130.1
Debt service/GDP	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.7	1.3	2.1	2.2	4.1	2.1	2.2
Total debt/GDP	17.6	19.1	20.5	17.2	17.4	22.6	24.2	23.6	23.7	24.0
Debt service/government revenue	5.6	5.0	5.1	6.4	4.9	11.3	11.8	22.8	11.3	10.7
Reserves/short-term debt	428.2	339.8	303.0	347.2	338.2	419.3	316.2	373.1	422.2	412.0

	Europe and Central Asia					*Least developed countries*				
	2009-2016	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016[b]*	*2009-2016*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016[b]*
Total external debt stocks[c]	1 448.0	1 703.9	1 573.7	1 449.0	1 457.9	208.1	216.0	229.6	242.9	262.6
Long-term debt	1 158.6	1 350.1	1 274.1	1 202.2	1 220.9	174.8	182.0	196.6	207.8	224.8
Short-term debt	244.7	316.6	271.6	216.9	205.0	19.4	19.7	19.7	22.5	21.3
Debt service	225.1	240.8	249.5	243.2	205.5	11.9	12.3	14.9	14.2	18.5
International reserves	760.3	861.7	718.6	675.6	685.4	109.0	126.9	118.9	117.3	117.0
Debt indicators (percentage)[d]										
Debt service/exports[e]	22.2	19.2	20.4	26.2	24.3	5.8	5.0	6.0	7.1	9.6
Total debt/exports	140.7	135.9	128.9	155.8	172.2	101.9	88.6	93.2	121.7	135.9
Debt service/GDP	6.9	5.8	6.4	8.4	7.4	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.9
Total debt/GDP	43.6	41.4	40.6	50.1	52.4	25.7	24.9	24.4	26.3	27.2
Debt service/government revenue	20.3	16.9	19.0	25.4	22.4	7.7	6.9	8.0	9.2	12.7
Reserves/short-term debt	315.4	272.2	264.6	311.4	334.3	590.7	667.4	626.9	538.0	566.9

Source: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development calculations based on the World Bank International Debt Statistics 2017 online database.

Abbreviation: GDP, gross domestic product.

[a] As defined in the International Debt Statistics publication.

[b] 2016 estimates.

[c] Total debt stocks include long-term debt, short-term debt and use of credit from the International Monetary Fund.

[d] Data used for ratio calculation have been adjusted on the basis of country data availability.

[e] Exports comprise exports of goods, services and primary income.

United Nations A/72/254

General Assembly

Distr.: General
31 July 2017

Original: English

Seventy-second session
Item 18 (d) of the provisional agenda*
Macroeconomic policy questions: commodities

World commodity trends and prospects

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared by the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/191, highlights recent trends in and prospects for world commodity markets and analyses their main drivers. It shows that 2016 marked the end of a five-year downward trend in commodity prices, which increased significantly during that year. However, falling commodity prices in the first four months of 2017 make it seem questionable whether there has been a real trend reversal. While the price increases of 2016 were good news for commodity-dependent developing countries, commodity prices overall remain significantly below their peak values in 2011. As highlighted in an interactive dialogue on trends in and perspectives on commodities markets organized by the United Nations in 2016, diversification is a key component of the strategy of commodity-dependent developing countries to reduce their vulnerability to commodity price volatility and shocks and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

* A/72/150.

17-13077 (E) 100817

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. The present report on world commodity trends and prospects was prepared by the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/191. The report analyses recent developments in commodity markets, focusing on price trends and their determinants. The three major commodity groups covered in the report are: (a) agricultural commodities, including food, tropical beverages, vegetable oilseeds and oils, and agricultural raw materials; (b) minerals, ores and metals; and (c) energy, including oil, gas and coal.

2. The report also summarizes discussions and lessons learned from an interactive dialogue on trends and perspectives in commodities markets that was held on 16 May 2016 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. In addition, the report highlights the importance of diversification and the key challenges to diversification in commodity-dependent developing countries.

II. Market developments in major commodity groups

A. General overview

3. After reaching the bottom of a five-year slump at the beginning of 2016, commodity prices trended upward until early 2017. The UNCTAD non-oil nominal commodity price index[1] reached 218.8 points in February 2017, which constituted an increase of 20.4 per cent from its January 2016 value of 181.8 points (see figure I). However, the latest data available for the present report show that commodity prices are again receding; the UNCTAD non-oil nominal commodity price index stood at 205.2 points in April 2017. Overall, commodity prices are still significantly lower than they were at the peak of the last commodity boom (see figure I).

4. The recovery of commodity prices in 2016 was mainly driven by supply constraints and output uncertainties, which particularly affected metals and agricultural commodity prices. El Niño-related adverse weather conditions caused output shortfalls in agricultural commodities such as palm oil, rice and coffee. The supply of minerals, ores and metals was hampered by the constriction of copper, nickel and zinc mine production. After supply conditions for several agricultural commodities and metals eased, the upward trend in commodity prices appears to have come to a halt in 2017.

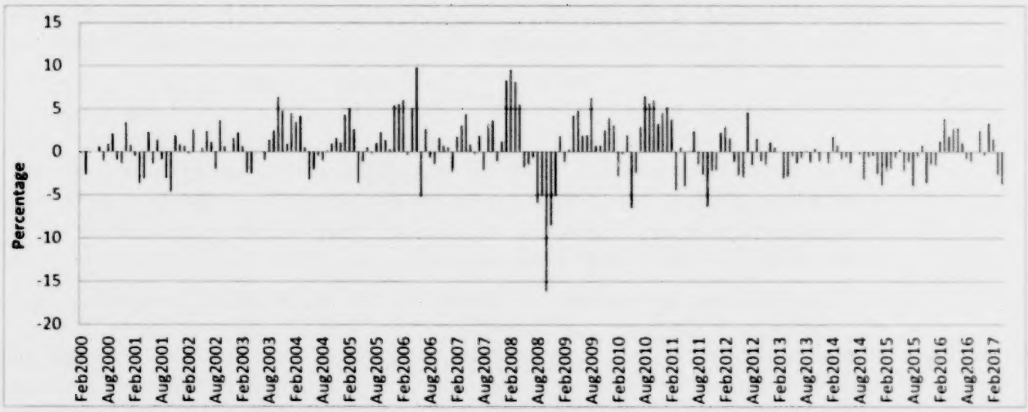
[1] The UNCTAD non-oil nominal commodity price index covers the following subgroups of commodities: all food (food, tropical beverages, vegetable oilseeds and oils), agricultural raw materials and minerals, ores and metals.

Figure I
UNCTAD non-oil price commodity price index (January 2000-April 2017)
(2000=100)

Source: UNCTAD secretariat, based on data from UNCTADstat.

5. Commodity price fluctuations have been moderate over the past 5 years (see figure II). The last time the UNCTAD non-oil nominal commodity price index recorded a monthly swing of more than 5 per cent was in October 2011. However, individual commodities have experienced substantial price fluctuations. The following section reviews market developments in major commodities groups.

Figure II
Monthly fluctuations in the UNCTAD non-oil nominal commodity price index (February 2000-April 2017)
(2000=100)



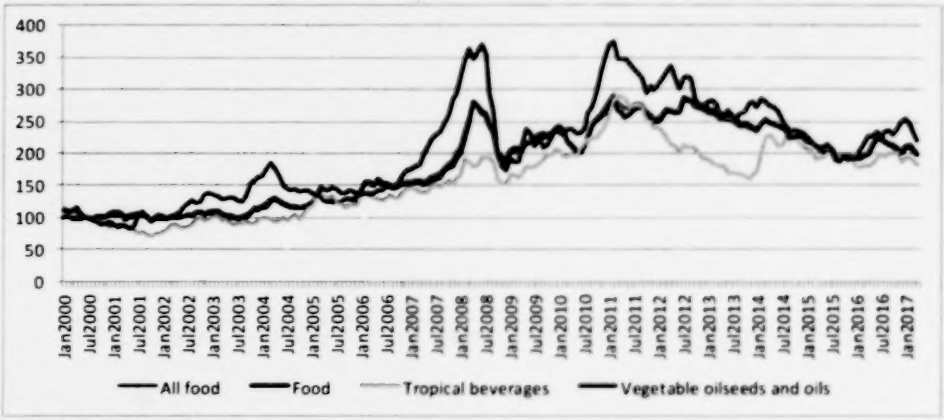
Source: UNCTAD secretariat, based on data from UNCTADstat.

B. Agricultural and food commodities

6. In January 2016, the UNCTAD food price index reached its lowest value in seven years, at 191.1 points. For the following six months, the index trended upward mainly owing to El Niño-related adverse weather conditions that caused output

shortfalls and uncertainties. Since mid-2016, food prices have been declining, with brief upward swings in January and February 2017. All subindices of the UNCTAD food price index saw marked losses between January and April 2017, with the index for vegetable oilseeds and oils experiencing the sharpest drop, of 13.6 per cent (see figure III).

Figure III
Price indices of selected commodity groups, January 2000-April 2017
(2000=100)



Source: UNCTAD secretariat, based on data from UNCTADstat.

7. Prices for grains have been generally trending downward since 2012, mainly owing to strong production and increasing stocks (see figure IV). The 2016/17 season marked a record for production of wheat and maize, leading to the largest ever recorded global supply of grains. As a consequence, the price of wheat (Hard Red Winter No. 2), at $191 per ton in April 2017, was down 4.5 per cent year on year and down 21.7 per cent relative to its level in April 2015. The price of maize (Yellow Maize No. 3) reached its lowest level in more than seven years, at $158 per ton in April 2017.

8. Going forward, grain markets are expected to remain fairly stable, subject to favourable weather conditions. The International Grains Council projects that wheat and maize production for the 2017/18 season will reach 736 and 1,026 million tons, respectively, slightly below their levels for the 2016/17 season.[2] Strong demand forecasts are projected to lead to a moderate reduction of stocks, which could generate a mild increase in grain prices.

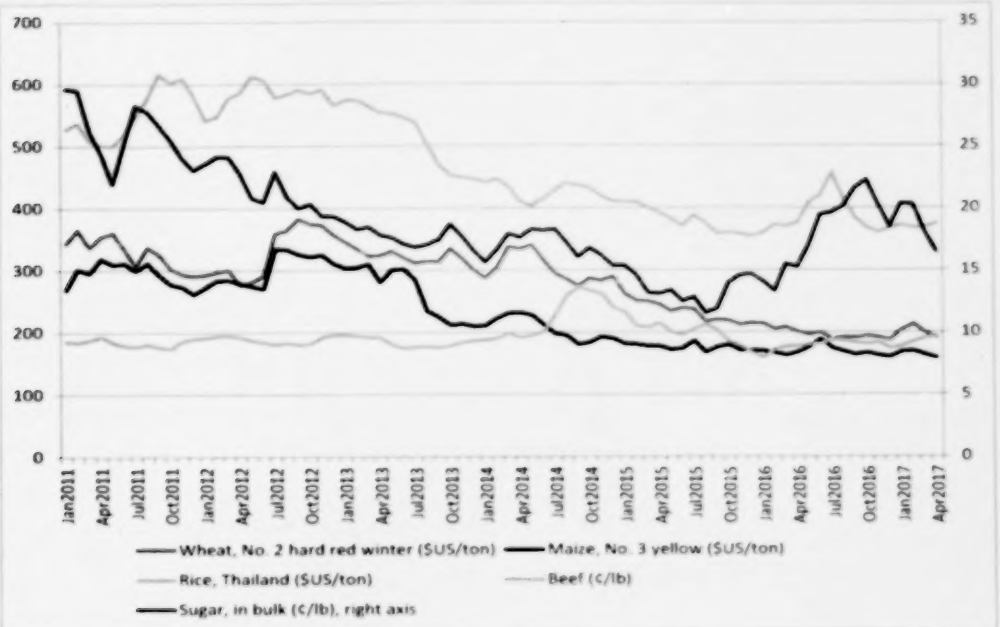
9. Rice markets saw a price rally during the first half of 2016. The price of Thai rice increased by 26.9 per cent between January and July 2016 owing to El Niño-related production losses in major producer countries such as India, Thailand and Viet Nam. Thereafter, forecasts of increases in world production led to a downward adjustment in prices. On a year-on-year basis, the price of Thai rice remained stable at $375 per ton in April 2017, compared with $376 per ton in April 2016. The market outlook for rice remains calm, with production and demand forecasts showing no major changes for the current season.

10. The sugar market experienced turmoil during the first three quarters of 2016, when a widening gap between supply and demand led to a drawdown of stocks to

[2] See International Grains Council grain market report No. 476 (27 April 2017).

historically low levels. Between January and October 2016, the price of sugar (the International Sugar Agreement average daily price) climbed by 58.1 per cent, from 14.05 cents per pound to 22.22 cents per pound. The price hike triggered an expansion of supply, which eventually brought the price of sugar down to 16.44 cents per pound in April 2017. Going forward, forecasts of rising global supply suggest that price increases are not to be expected for the upcoming season. At present, the only upside risk for the price of sugar is the potential for production shortfalls caused if El Niño conditions should occur in 2017.

Figure IV
Nominal prices of selected food and agricultural commodities, January 2011-April 2017 (2000=100)



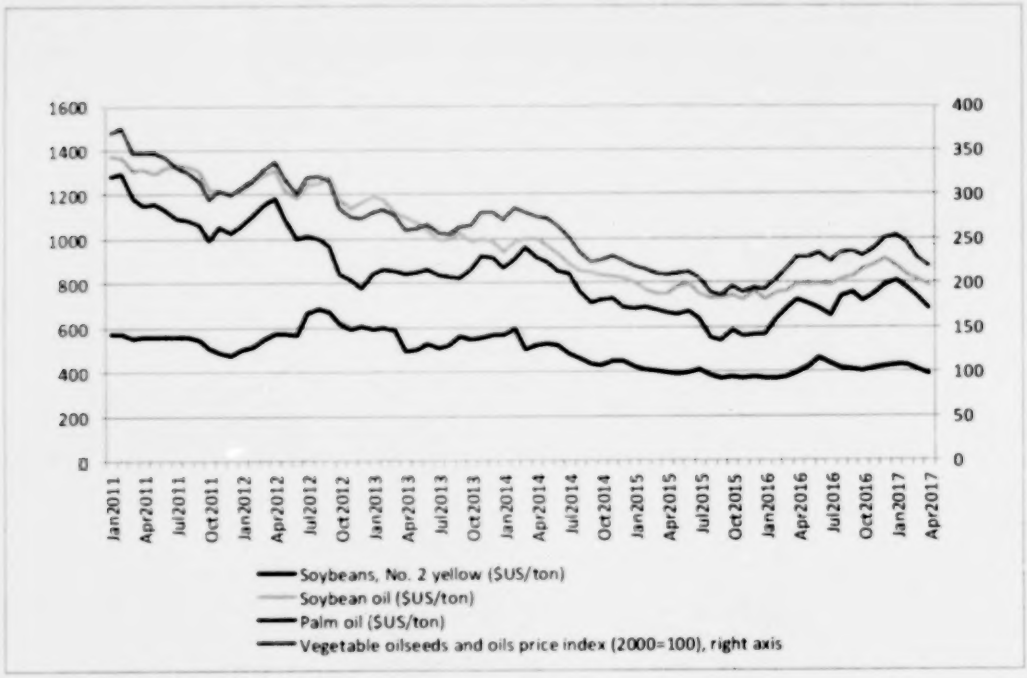
Source: UNCTAD secretariat, based on data from UNCTADstat.

11. The price of frozen beef from Australia and New Zealand reached an all-time high in September 2014, at 272 cents per pound, owing to tight supply conditions. Thereafter, rising supply and weakening demand triggered a downward trend that lasted until January 2016, when the price of beef was down to 159 cents per pound, which constitutes a 41.6 per cent drop over the course of 16 months. In 2016, beef markets showed less volatility, with a moderate upward price trend during the first half of the year, followed by a mild downward trend during the second half of 2016. Strong demand caused a 9.0 per cent increase in the price of beef, from 177 cents per pound in January 2017 to 193 cents per pound in April 2017. Going forward, a moderate upward price trend seems likely based on supply and demand projections.

12. The UNCTAD vegetable oilseeds and oils price index showed a downward trend between August 2011 and September 2015, losing 42.7 per cent of its value during that period (see figure V). In 2016, the trend reversed somewhat, owing to shortfalls in the production of oilseeds such as soybeans in South America and palm oil in South-East Asia as a result of adverse weather conditions caused by El Niño. Projections of a record production of soybeans for the 2016/17 growing season led to a decline in the prices of vegetable oilseeds and oils during the first quarter of

2017. In April 2017, the vegetable oilseeds and oils price index averaged 219 points, up 17.5 per cent from September 2015. Although forecasts for 2017/18 show increasing demand, they also show rising total oilseed production; prices are therefore expected to remain fairly stable.

Figure V
Price index and prices of selected commodities in vegetable oilseeds and oils markets, January 2011-April 2017



Source: UNCTAD secretariat, based on data from UNCTADstat.

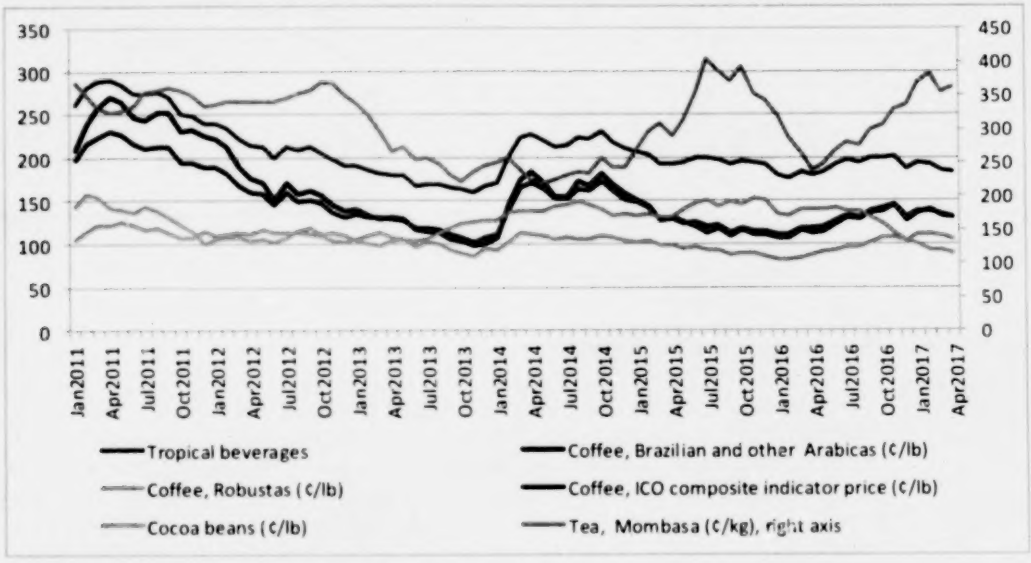
13. The price index for tropical beverages has been fairly stable since early 2015, averaging 183 points in April 2017, an increase of 1.3 per cent on a year-on-year basis (see figure VI). However, the stability of the composite index masks substantial fluctuations in the markets of individual tropical beverages. Fuelled by droughts in Brazil and a strong Brazilian real, the International Coffee Organization composite indicator price showed a steep increase of 31.4 per cent, from 111 cents per pound in January 2016 to 145 cents per pound in November 2016. Thereafter, the price rally reversed in line with a reversal of the underlying drivers as weather prospects and supply forecasts for major producing countries improved and the Brazilian real depreciated. In April 2017, the International Coffee Organization composite indicator price averaged 130 cents per pound, up 10.6 per cent on a year-on-year basis, but down 10.6 per cent from November 2016. Forecasts of healthy production during the 2017/18 growing season indicate that price increases are unlikely over the medium term, unless unfavourable weather conditions have an impact on harvests.

14. Prices of cocoa beans started to trend downward in July 2016 amid predictions of increasing production in West Africa and a supply surplus forecast for the 2016/17 season. In April 2017, the price of cocoa beans averaged 89 cents per pound, its lowest level in almost a decade and down 41.6 per cent from 152 cents per pound in November 2015. The negative price trend was fuelled by expectations

of significant production increases in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana and a record supply surplus. Looking ahead, strong production is not likely to be outpaced by growing demand; therefore, prices for cocoa beans are expected to remain low.

15. The markets for tea were characterized by a high degree of variability over the past two years. In July 2015, the price of Mombasa black tea reached an all-time average high of 403 cents per kilogram. Thereafter, the price plummeted to 238 cents per kilogram in April 2016, a drop of 41 per cent in nine months. That trend was mainly driven by surplus supply. After another trend reversal in mid-2016, the price of Mombasa black tea averaged 362 cents per kilogram in April 2017, up 52.1 per cent from April 2016. The price of tea is expected to remain volatile as weather-related risks in main growing regions make it difficult to forecast the supply.

Figure VI
Price trends in selected tropical beverage commodities, January 2011-April 2017



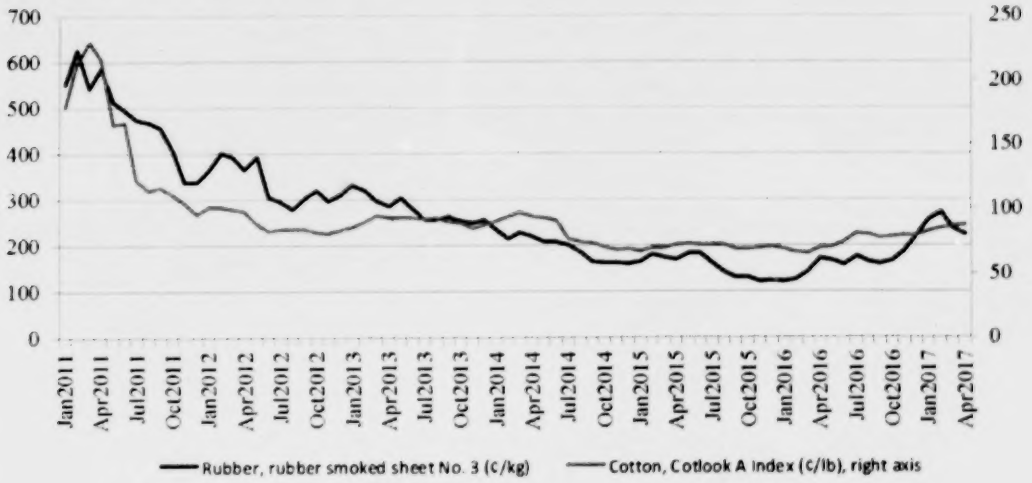
Source: UNCTAD secretariat, based on data from UNCTADstat.

16. Prices of agricultural raw materials followed a steep downward trend from the peak of the commodity boom period, in 2011, to 2015 (see figure VII). For instance, the price of rubber (ribbed smoked sheet No. 3) plummeted from 626 cents per kilogram in February 2011 to 165 cents per kilogram in January 2015, a decrease of 73.6 per cent. After rubber prices declined further during the second half of 2015, major producers, including Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, put in place an export quota scheme in March 2016. The quota induced a trend reversal and a 54.2 per cent price increase, from 145 cents per kilogram in March 2016 to 223 cents per kilogram in April 2017. Going forward, since growth in global rubber demand is expected to outpace production increases, the continuation of the upward price trend seems likely.

17. The price of cotton (Cotlook A Index) declined by 70.7 per cent, from 230 cents per pound in March 2011 to 67 cents per pound in January 2015. Thereafter, prices remained essentially flat through March 2016, when an upward trend set in. In April 2017, the price of Cotlook A Index stood at 87 cents per pound, which constitutes a 25.6 per cent increase on a year-on-year basis. The market outlook for cotton tentatively predicts an increase in production and a continuation of stockpile

auctions by the Government of China, which will likely moderate the upward price trend in 2017.

Figure VII
Price trends of selected commodities in agricultural raw materials markets, January 2011-April 2017



Source: UNCTAD secretariat, based on data from UNCTADstat.

C. Minerals, ores and metals

18. The prices of minerals, ores and metals trended downward for almost five years following their peak in early 2011. Between February 2011 and January 2016, the UNCTAD minerals, ores and metals price index fell from 418 points to 178 points, which corresponds to a loss of 57.3 per cent.[3] The downward trend was broken in 2016, with the price index reaching 239 points in December 2016. This price rally was mainly driven by supply cuts and uncertainties, in particular in the markets for nickel, copper and zinc. On a year-on-year basis, the UNCTAD minerals, ores and metals price index gained 37.8 per cent in January 2017. That upward trend came to a halt at the end of the first quarter of 2017, and the UNCTAD minerals, ores and metals price index fell 5.5 per cent, from 254 points in February 2017 to 240 points in April 2017 (see figure VIII). The main driver of that downward movement was a sharp decline in iron ore prices due to expectations of lower iron ore demand from China.

19. The price of iron ore is strongly driven by Chinese consumption, as the country imports more than two thirds of total seaborne iron ore. In particular, steel production in China is an important indicator of the demand for iron ore. As growth in steel production in China slowed in 2014 and turned negative in 2015, the price of imported iron ore at the port of Tianjin lost 70.3 per cent of its value, falling from $136 per dry ton in December 2013 to $40 per dry ton in December 2015 (see figure VIII). Thereafter, prices for iron ore picked up and almost doubled between January and December 2016, based on recuperating demand from China and the

[3] The UNCTAD minerals, ores and metals price index covers copper, aluminium, iron ore, nickel, lead, zinc, tin, phosphate rock, manganese ore and tungsten ore. Gold and silver are not included in the price index.

reduction of output from high-cost mines. In April 2017, weakening demand for steel in China and concerns regarding oversupply caused a drop in iron ore prices to $71 per dry ton. Going forward, favourable supply conditions make substantial price increases unlikely in the near future.

Figure VIII

Minerals, ores and metals price index (2000=100) and the nominal price of iron ore, January 2011-April 2017

Source: UNCTAD secretariat, based on data from UNCTADstat.

20. The price of copper at the London Metal Exchange reached its highest level ever, recorded in February 2011 at $9,867 per ton. Thereafter, an extended downward trend reduced the copper price to just over half of its peak level, to $4,458 per ton in January 2016 (see figure IX). Between June 2016 and December 2016, copper prices rallied 21.9 per cent despite strong supply growth based on expanded operations in existing mines and new mine production in Peru and Mexico. The price increase was attributed to several factors, including a pick-up in Chinese demand and increased speculation following the 2016 presidential election in the United States of America. With the supply forecast of the International Copper Study Group showing a reduction of 1 per cent for 2017, a further increase in copper prices seems likely.

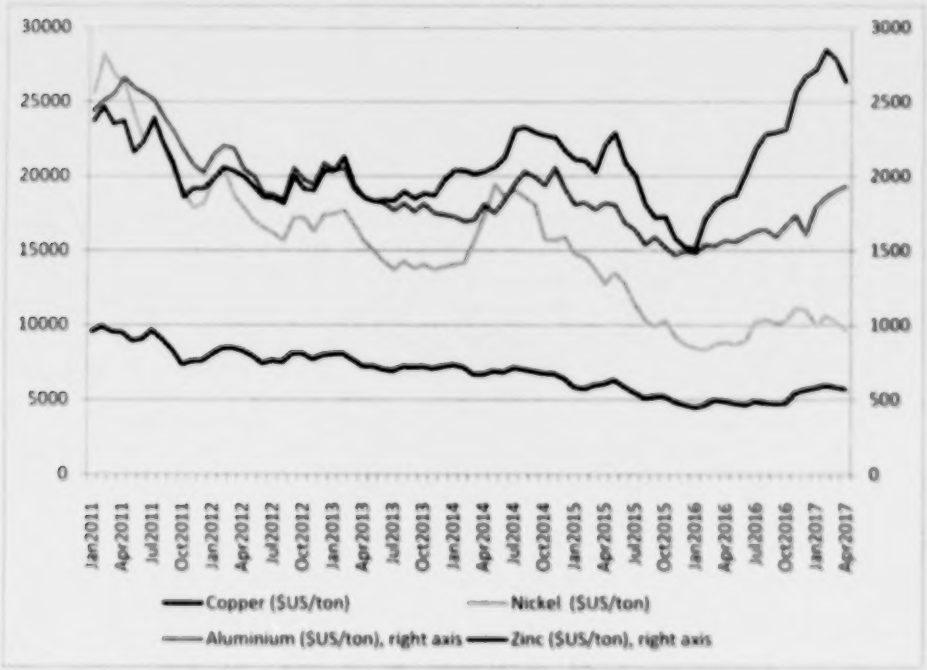
21. Aluminium prices fluctuated around a downward trend in 2015 owing to strong growth in supply and low growth in demand. Between January and December 2015, the price of aluminium on the London Metal Exchange declined by 17.4 per cent, from $1,808 per ton to $1,494 per ton (see figure IX). Thereafter, aluminium prices increased amid higher-than-expected demand growth and supply cuts in late 2015. In April 2017, the price of aluminium on the London Metal Exchange averaged $1,931 per ton. Looking ahead, since the recent price increase can be expected to stimulate supply, a further strong price increase seems unlikely.

22. The price of nickel showed a brief deviation from its general downward trend in early 2014, when Indonesia implemented a ban on exports of unprocessed ore. After the Philippines increased its nickel exports, in particular to China, nickel prices resumed a downward trend that persisted until early 2016 (see figure IX). As a consequence, the price of nickel on the London Metal Exchange fell 56.4 per cent, from $19,047 per ton in July 2014 to $8,306 per ton in February 2016. Thereafter,

mine shutdowns in the Philippines owing to environmental concerns drove the nickel price up to $11,010 per ton in December 2016, before it receded to $9,665 per ton in April 2017. With the easing by Indonesia of its export ban on unprocessed nickel, supply conditions have improved and a moderate price decrease seems probable going forward.

23. Zinc markets have been characterized by a high degree of volatility over the past two years. Between May 2015 and January 2016, the price of zinc on the London Metal Exchange dropped 34.0 per cent, from $2,289 per ton to $1,512 per ton (see figure IX). Weak demand and a supply surplus were the main reasons for the price fall in 2015. Thereafter, mine closures and production cutbacks led to a supply deficit that triggered a trend reversal, with the price of zinc rallying 88.4 per cent between January 2016 and February 2017, when it reached $2,848 per ton, its highest level since October 2007. However, between February and April 2017, the price of zinc decreased by 7.6 per cent. Since the zinc supply deficit of 2016 was mainly due to the restraining of output by key producers, it seems likely that high zinc prices will at some point induce an increase in supply; therefore, significant price increases do not seem likely going forward.

Figure IX
Nominal prices for selected minerals, ores and metals, January 2011-April 2017

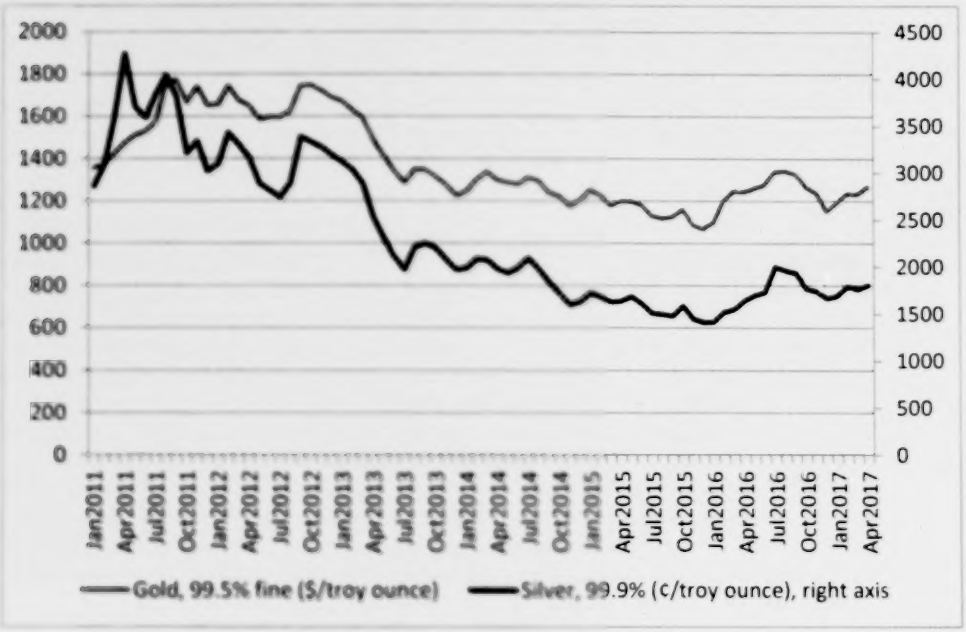


Source: UNCTAD secretariat, based on data from UNCTADstat.

24. Prices of precious metals increased significantly during the first half of 2016 (see figure X). From January 2016 to July 2016, gold prices increased by 21.9 per cent, from $1,097 per troy ounce to $1,337 per troy ounce. During the same period, the price of silver increased by 41.7 per cent, from 1,411 cents per troy ounce to 1,999 cents per troy ounce. Geopolitical and macroeconomic uncertainty resulting from several factors, including the decision by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to leave the European Union and low interest rates in major economies, seem to have stimulated investments in gold and silver and thus

strengthened the prices of precious metals during that period. Gold and silver prices decreased in the last quarter of 2016 amid the raising of the policy rate in the United States by the Federal Reserve Board and a strengthening of the United States dollar. In April 2017, the prices of gold and silver averaged $1,266 per troy ounce and 1,803 cents per troy ounce, respectively. Going forward, further increases in the United States policy rate remain a key downside risk to the price of precious metals, while upside risks include geopolitical conditions and a potentially weaker dollar.

Figure X
Nominal prices of gold and silver, January 2011-April 2017



Source: UNCTAD secretariat, based on data from UNCTADstat.

D. Energy

Crude oil

25. Crude oil prices have been characterized by a high degree of variability over the past decade. Between January 2007 and May 2017, the average spot price of Brent crude oil[6] fluctuated between $133.9 per barrel and $30.8 per barrel (see figure XI). The bottom price during that period, $30.8 per barrel, was recorded in January 2016 and constituted the lowest value since December 2003. Between June 2014 and January 2015, the oil price plummeted by 56.7 per cent, from $107.0 per barrel to $48.4 per barrel. Since then, oil prices overall have remained at depressed levels.

26. The main driver of the oil price collapse in late 2014 was an oversupply that had its roots in the massive increase in shale oil production in North America, leading to increases in production in countries that are not members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and a slowdown of growth in crude oil demand. The build-up of large crude oil inventories

[6] Hereinafter referred to as the "oil price".

compounded the supply-demand imbalance. According to data from the United States Energy Information Administration, global oil production increased from 93.7 million barrels per day in July 2014 to 97.5 million barrels per day in July 2015, with non-OPEC production accounting for 46 per cent of the 3.8-million-barrels-per-day increase in global production. Global consumption only increased by 2.6 million barrels per day during the same period, leading to a substantial increase in inventories.

27. As a reaction to falling prices, OPEC decided at its Ministerial Conference on 30 November 2016 to cut production by 1.2 million barrels per day starting in January 2017, with Saudi Arabia implementing the largest production cut, at 486,000 barrels per day. The OPEC production cuts were the basis of a deal signed shortly thereafter on 9 December 2016 with major non-OPEC oil producers, including the Russian Federation, under which non-OPEC countries agreed to cut production by 558,000 barrels per day. The agreement to curtail production had a short-term impact, with the oil price rising by 20.0 per cent, from $45.3 per barrel in November 2016 to $54.4 per barrel in February 2017, before levelling off at $49.9 per barrel in May 2017.

28. At a meeting on 25 May 2017, OPEC and non-OPEC oil producers decided to extend the production cuts, which had been limited to June 2017 in the original agreement, through March 2018. The impact of that decision will depend both on the degree of compliance with the agreed production cuts and on the extent to which oil producers that are not party to the agreement will step up output. For instance, the United States increased production by 4.7 per cent, from 14.71 million barrels per day in January 2017 to 15.4 million barrels per day in May 2017, which offset almost 40 per cent of the OPEC-led production cuts. While there might be technical and other limitations on further short-term production increases in the United States, the production cut agreed in May 2017 seems unlikely to be substantial enough on its own to drive up the oil price to the levels of early 2014. Moreover, inventories remain at high levels, which makes sharp increases in the oil price seem unlikely. In terms of upside risk, expectations of stronger demand growth could support a stronger oil price going forward.

Natural gas

29. Markets for natural gas have traditionally been regionalized owing to the physical limitations on its transport and the different contractual arrangements prevailing in different regions. That has led to the coexistence of various reference prices that differ markedly at times and occasionally move in opposite directions. For instance, in February 2012, the border price in Germany for 1 million metric British thermal units of Russian natural gas was $12.22, while the price at the Henry Hub terminal in the state of Louisiana in the United States was only $2.53 per million metric British thermal units.

30. The Henry Hub natural gas price, often cited as a global benchmark, reached $1.70 per million metric British thermal units in March 2016 (see figure XI), which was the lowest level in more than 20 years, mainly owing to low consumption resulting from a mild winter. Thereafter, prices at the Henry Hub fluctuated around an upward trend, with an average price of $3.12 per million metric British thermal units in May 2017. The United States Energy Information Administration forecasts that demand for consumption and exports will outpace supply in 2017 and 2018, leading to lower inventory levels. Therefore, further increases in the Henry Hub natural gas price seem likely going forward.

31. Looking ahead, the rapid expansion of liquefied natural gas infrastructure and new technology are likely to lead to a higher degree of global market integration.

Global liquefaction capacity stood at 340 million tonnes per annum in January 2017, almost double its value of 171 million tonnes per annum in 2005.[5] With the construction of liquefaction capacity of over 100 million tonnes per annum on the way in 2017, primarily in Australia and the United States, liquefaction capacity is expected to continue to grow at a rapid pace. In 2015, liquefied natural gas accounted for 32.5 per cent of global trade in natural gas.[6] Over the medium term, increased liquefied natural gas capacity could contribute to a convergence of natural gas prices.

Coal

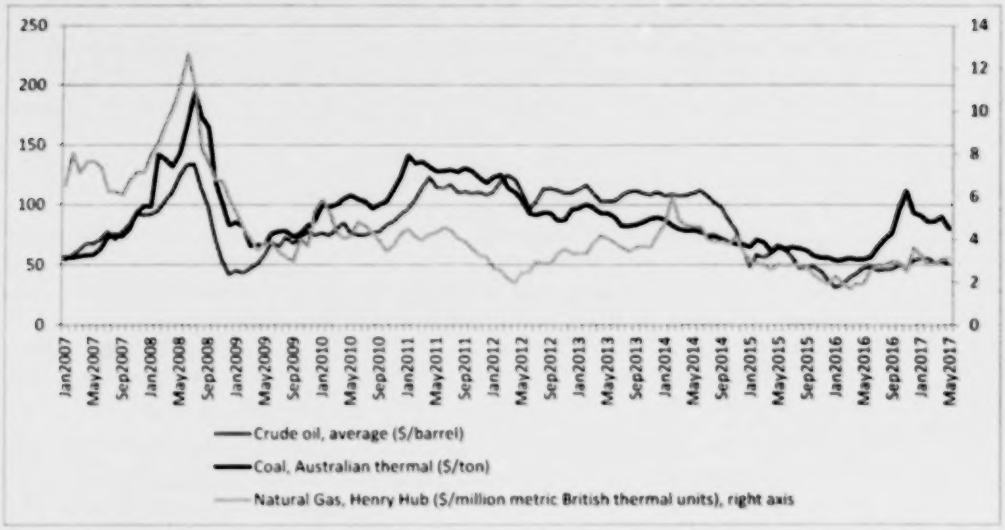
32. Coal continues to be the primary fuel for electricity generation at the global level. In addition, coal is a key source of thermal energy for the steel and cement industries. Since coal is also responsible for 45 per cent of energy-related carbon emissions, reducing its share in the global energy mix remains a key challenge in the context of climate change mitigation. According to forecasts by the International Energy Agency, the share of coal in power generation is on a downward trajectory and is expected to drop from 41 per cent in 2014 to 36 per cent in 2021.

33. Coal prices were fluctuating around a downward trend between early 2014 and mid-2016, which was mainly driven by persistent oversupply and sluggish import demand from China. The reference price, Australian thermal coal, decreased by 36.1 per cent, from $88 per metric ton in January 2014 to $56 per metric ton in June 2016. Thereafter, the coal price experienced a sharp increase, up to $111 per metric ton in November 2016, based on tightened supply from Australia and increased import demand from China, where domestic production had been cut to reduce oversupply and increase the profitability of the coal sector. After supply conditions improved, mainly owing to a partial rollback of Chinese production restrictions, the price of coal receded to $80 per metric ton in May 2017. Looking ahead, in the light of ample supply capacity, further downward movement of the coal price seems likely.

[5] International Gas Union, "2010 world liquefied natural gas report" (2010); and "2017 world liquefied natural gas report" (2017).

[6] British Petroleum, "Statistical Review of World Energy" (2016).

Figure XI
Crude oil (petroleum), coal and natural gas prices, January 2007-May 2017



Source: UNCTAD secretariat, based on data from the international financial statistics issued by the International Monetary Fund.

III. International dialogue on commodities and the challenge of diversification

A. Interactive dialogue on trends and perspectives in commodities markets

34. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/191, an interactive dialogue aimed at reviewing world commodity trends and prospects, in particular in commodity-dependent countries, took place on 16 May 2016 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The theme of the dialogue was "Trends and prospects in commodities markets and their implications in commodity-dependent developing countries". The President of the General Assembly opened the event, followed by presentations by participants from the International Labour Organization, IMF, UNCTAD, academia and civil society and interventions by representatives of Member States. The main issues that were discussed during the dialogue are summarized below.

35. Revenues from commodity production and exports remain critical for developing countries, in particular in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, given that developing countries need to mobilize resources in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Commodity prices have been decreasing since 2011, which has put pressure on government budgets in emerging economies and least developed countries. Countries in special situations, such as least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, face particular challenges as lower commodity prices threaten the sustainable growth and the debt positions of such countries.

36. The key factors driving the downward pressure on commodities prices are oversupply, lacklustre global economic conditions and a strong United States dollar

relative to other currencies. The financialization of commodities markets has also increased the volatility of commodity prices. Different primary commodity groups show variations in the factors that are driving the decreasing market prices. The markets for minerals, metals and ores, for example, were particularly affected by fragile economic recovery in developed economies such as Japan and the European Union and slowing growth in China and other emerging economies. The outcome of those driving factors and falling commodity prices present a challenging environment for commodity-dependent developing countries. That is particularly damaging for countries where Governments seem to have poorly anticipated the reversal of upward price trends after a decade-long commodity price boom. For commodity-dependent developing countries, the negative effects of commodity prices result in worsening fiscal positions, increasing debt vulnerability and sovereign risk, deteriorating current account balances and depletion of foreign reserves. For instance, government budget deficits in African countries doubled on average between 2010 and 2015 to 6.9 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), in part as a result of commodity price decreases and a decline in revenues.

37. A recent assessment by IMF shows that, while commodity-dependent developing countries have seen their growth performance drastically reduced as a result of the marked decrease in commodities prices, the growth prospects of countries that have diversified exports have not changed much. In addition, when countries move towards diversified sources of growth, they achieve more equal societies. As equality is the basis for sustainability, there is also a critical link with the Sustainable Development Goals. IMF predicts that countries with diversified economies will continue to see their GDP grow by an average of 6 per cent per year, while commodity-dependent developing countries will see their growth prospects decline from 6 per cent to 3 per cent, thus making a strong case for economic diversification. Diversification takes time, however, and can be considered a medium-term economic goal. A common reaction of Governments when fiscal situations deteriorate is to cut public spending. That, however, reduces public investment, which has a counterproductive effect on economic growth prospects. Therefore, in the short-term, Governments need to be careful about cutting public expenditures and strive to increase revenue mobilization, which will help to stabilize the ratio of public debt to GDP.

38. Integrated commodity policies to address food security were another key topic discussed during the interactive dialogue. Falling food prices may initially be positive for consumers in developing countries. If developing countries are also exporters of such commodities, however, lower food prices may lead to an imbalance in government income, resulting in an inability to properly fund agricultural development policies, which would have ramifications for food security. The key to food security lies in agricultural development policies that expand the access of small-scale farmers to supply chains and markets in general. That does not imply that the products of small-scale farmers be should be designated for export, but rather, for example, that such rural products should be sold in urban markets nationally. Such inclusion is particularly important for women.

39. The interactive dialogue also addressed social protection and job creation issues. Inclusive and sustained growth cannot be achieved without job creation. That is especially relevant in the light of projections that 600 million new jobs will be required by 2020. Recent economic growth, however, has sometimes been referred to as "jobless growth", meaning that, although there has been economic growth in developing countries, for example, 6 to 8 per cent growth in the least developed countries since 2000, that has not translated into the creation of more jobs. This phenomenon affects youth in particular. Furthermore, as commodity markets are characterized by high volatility, the gains from windfall revenues during boom

periods have typically been outweighed by the negative impact of falling and low prices. The challenge is therefore to reduce volatility and risk associated with commodity dependence, which would improve long-term growth and development prospects.

40. Overall, the interactive dialogue highlighted the fact that commodity dependence affects most developing countries. Over the medium and long terms, diversification into higher value-added products and services, as well as the expansion of markets through regional trade agreements, can help reduce commodity dependence. Excessive price volatility requires globally coordinated action, especially for small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, given their structural constraints. Solutions proposed included a call for more price transparency along the lines of the Agricultural Market Information System and the joint organization data initiative for oil and gas data transparency. In order to increase food security, regional food reserves, increased regional trade and regional infrastructure banks to support infrastructure development were proposed. New agricultural development strategies that facilitate diversification into non-farm activities and better integrate small, medium-sized and large farmers into rural-urban, regional and global supply chains are also needed.

B. The challenge of diversification

41. The interactive dialogue on trends and perspectives in commodities markets highlighted the risks and negative impact associated with commodity dependence. In that regard, the volatility of international commodity markets over the past decade underscores the need for structural transformation in commodity-dependent developing countries. Those countries are, by definition, characterized by a high level of concentration of their export earnings. In many cases, commodity-dependent developing countries depend on a narrow range of commodities that are exported to a small number of export markets. That feature poses a number of risks to growth and development in commodity-dependent developing countries.[7] The key sources of those risks are an elevated degree of economic volatility and a higher level of external dependence of affected countries. Since volatility has been shown to be detrimental to economic growth, commodity dependence poses a threat to the long-term development prospects of commodity-dependent developing countries.

42. While there are strategies for commodity-dependent developing countries to manage the potential negative impacts of external variability induced by high export concentration, such as countercyclical fiscal policy, ultimately the only way to overcome commodity dependency in a sustainable way is to diversify a country's export base. A more diversified export structure means more stability of foreign exchange revenues and generally less variability in the rate of economic growth, which is beneficial for long-term income and productivity growth.

43. Export diversification can take different forms. Horizontal diversification consists of expanding the product range in a given sector, while vertical diversification entails a change in the relative shares of sectors in total exports. In addition, a shift from primary commodities towards more sophisticated export products leads to more value added being retained in exporting countries. The production of higher value-added goods also induces the creation of better-paying jobs than those typically available in commodity production. Hence, both

[7] A forthcoming report on commodities and development by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development will provide a detailed analysis of the transmission channels through which commodity dependence affects various aspects of economic, social and human development.

diversification and moving up the value chain are important elements of the structural transformation that is needed for commodity-dependent developing countries to reach a growth and development path that is sustainable over the long term.

44. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy to export diversification and quality upgrading. Each commodity-dependent developing country faces a unique set of challenges and bottlenecks that need to be addressed in order to initiate a process of structural transformation. Policies that can support diversification generally include measures that are conducive to investment, which is a key driver for the emergence of new products and industries. Such measures include stabilization of the macroeconomic environment, improvement of the business climate, including access to finance, strengthening of human capital and investment in infrastructure. Policies that support the creation of production linkages between commodity and non-commodity sectors can also contribute to diversification.

45. Several organizations of the United Nations system implement projects that support industrial diversification in developing countries. For example, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization is supporting a number of West African countries in strengthening their infrastructure for the assurance of quality and standards in order to promote non-commodity exports. Ensuring that the quality and safety standards required by major destination markets are met addresses an important constraint for many potential export products from developing countries. Furthermore, the World Bank is financing numerous projects that aim at diversifying the exports and income sources of commodity-dependent developing countries. For instance, a project in Mongolia is helping small and medium-sized enterprises in non-minerals sectors to access export markets. Another World Bank-financed project aims at strengthening agribusiness across Zambia.

46. UNCTAD has also been implementing projects that help commodity-dependent developing countries to diversify their economies, improve value addition and transform their commodity sectors into major sources of growth and sustainable development. Currently, technical cooperation activities include two United Nations Development Account projects: the first, funded from the ninth tranche United Nations Development Account, entitled "Strengthening the capacity of the Economic Community of Central African States to enhance domestic production linkages from the mineral resources sector", assists countries in establishing the conditions necessary for generating enhanced domestic linkages from the mineral sector to the rest of the economy, so that investment in the sector will facilitate the generation of jobs and opportunities for local enterprises; the second, funded from the tenth tranche of the United Nations Development Account, entitled "Promoting cotton by-products in Eastern and Southern Africa", assists in building the capacity of cotton value chain stakeholders to assess the market situation and prospects for cotton by-products and in improving the capacity of policymakers to formulate evidence-based policies to develop cotton by-products and to devise investment profiles to attract potential investors in those industries.

47. Going forward, a key challenge for commodity-dependent developing countries will be to achieve sustainable and productive diversification, which essentially entails structural transformation towards higher productivity and higher-value-added sectors and activities that can be sustained over the long term. In the context of the 2030 Agenda, it also entails considering the environmental and social aspects of structural transformation, including its contribution to poverty eradication. In addition, strategies for industrial diversification need to focus on the inclusion of women, who face specific gender-related challenges, including with respect to access to land and credit and social norms that limit their economic participation.

C. Conclusions and policy actions

48. The commodity price slump that started in 2011 came to a preliminary end in early 2016, and commodity prices were on a path of recovery until early 2017. However, the most recent price figures cast doubt on whether the commodity price increases of 2016 marked a lasting trend reversal. Rising prices in 2016 provided some relief for commodity-dependent developing countries that had been hit hard by the economic downturn caused by five years of falling prices. However, the volatility and lack of predictability of commodity markets over the past decade, which have experienced both major upswings and downswings in commodity prices, have once again illustrated the fundamental risks associated with commodity dependence. Therefore, pursuing economic and export market diversification could be seen as a forward-looking development strategy that would also help to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Diversification would bring about more resilient economies that are not solely dependent on commodity export revenues.

49. Diversification is not only an insurance mechanism through which commodity-based economies can shield themselves against volatility in global markets, but also a driver of economic growth and development. Governments of commodity-dependent developing countries can support the process of diversification through policies that foster a stable macroeconomic environment conducive to investment and that ensure the creation of the high-quality infrastructure and the workplace skills needed in the private sector for the development of new businesses and industries. In that context, international organizations can assist commodity-dependent developing countries in their diversification efforts by supporting local and national projects, promoting effective policy tools and sharing lessons learned from successful cases of structural transformation. Upgrading capacity-building in commodity-dependent developing countries should be at the centre of that process.

United Nations A/72/255

General Assembly

Distr.: General
31 July 2017

Original: English

Seventy-second session
Item 9 of the provisional agenda*
Report of the Economic and Social Council

United Nations Population Award, 2017

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Secretary of the Committee for the United Nations Population Award. The report, which covers the Award for 2017, was prepared in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 1982/112.

* A/72/150.

17-13080 (E) 080817

Please recycle

Report of the Secretary of the Committee for the United Nations Population Award on the United Nations Population Award, 2017

I. Introduction

1. On 17 December 1981, the General Assembly adopted resolution 36/201, entitled "Establishment of the United Nations Population Award". The Award is presented annually to an individual or individuals, to an institution or institutions, or to any combination thereof, for the most outstanding contribution to increasing awareness of population questions or to finding solutions to them.

2. The Committee for the United Nations Population Award selects the laureate for the Award. The Committee is composed of representatives of 10 States Members of the United Nations, elected by the Economic and Social Council for a period of three years. The Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund acts as Secretary of the Committee and submits to the General Assembly an annual report on the Award and its Trust Fund.

3. In its decision 41/445, the General Assembly amended article 2, paragraph 1, of the regulations governing the Award so that an individual and an institution may share the Award.

4. In its decision 1987/129, the Economic and Social Council amended the rules of procedure of the Committee accordingly.

5. The current elected members of the Committee are Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Benin, the Gambia, Ghana, Haiti, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Paraguay and Poland.

6. During its organizational meeting on 17 February 2017, the Committee elected the Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations, Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, as Chair for 2017.

II. United Nations Population Award, 2017

7. The Committee received 21 nominations from qualified nominators for the 2017 Award: 10 were for the individual category and 11 for the institutional category. On 11 April 2017, in accordance with the mandate given by the General Assembly, and after a thorough review of the nominations, the Committee selected Dr. Hans Rosling of Sweden (posthumously)[1] in the individual category and the Association des Chefs Traditionnels du Niger in the institutional category.

A. Individual category

8. The Committee selected Dr. Rosling in recognition of his dedication and unwavering commitment to public health, population dynamics and the eradication of poverty in his multiple capacities as a physician, a researcher and a teacher, and for his remarkable contribution to a better understanding of international and global health through his numerous publications and initiatives.

[1] Dr. Rosling was nominated in 2016 but died on 7 February 2017, before the selection process was completed.

9. As a champion of international cooperation, Dr. Rosling led health research collaborations with universities in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. In order to educate and raise awareness of global health issues, Dr. Rosling regularly gave pro bono presentations and produced a number of widely distributed documentaries and educational videos, which can be found on the Gapminder website, which he co-founded.

10. While serving as a medical officer in northern Mozambique in the 1980s, Dr. Rosling's investigations led to the discovery of the cause of the epidemic paralytic disease known as konzo. He spent two decades studying outbreaks of the disease in remote rural areas across Africa.

11. Before his untimely death in February 2017, Dr. Rosling was professor of international health at the Karolinska Institute, Sweden.

B. Institutional category

12. The Committee selected the Association des Chefs Traditionnels du Niger in recognition of its unique contribution to ensuring that population issues and their solutions were placed at the centre of development in the Niger over the past decade, not only in communities but also at the national level.

13. Through its members, who are Niger's traditional chiefs, the Association has promoted the improvement of reproductive health care for women, girls and children in general. It has advocated the elimination of child, early and forced marriage and has supported girls' education, empowering them to make appropriate choices in their lives. The Association has been a powerful voice and advocate for increased investment in health and education.

14. Through its advocacy, the Association has created an enabling environment for addressing population issues and has broken long-held taboos by publicly making commitments to family planning and reproductive health in general. Since 2001, the Association has worked to promote immunization in order to prevent diseases and mortality.

III. Financial matters

15. As at 31 December 2016, the Trust Fund of the United Nations Population Award had a total fund balance of $1,739,958.32. Interest income in 2016 was $16,462.18. Expenditure in 2017, including prizes awarded to the two laureates, totalled $88,495.36.

United Nations A/72/256

General Assembly

Distr.: General
31 July 2017

Original: English

Seventy-second session
Item 73 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/171 and provides an overview of the activities of the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region from August 2015 to July 2017. The report highlights the achievements of the Centre and provides an outline of the steps taken to strengthen its effectiveness and efficiency in responding to the increasing need and demand for support and technical assistance for the promotion of human rights in the countries covered by the Centre.

* A/72/150

17-13090 (E) 090817

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/171, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit at its seventy-second session a report on the implementation of the resolution. It provides an overview of the activities and achievements of the Centre from August 2015 to July 2017.

2. In February 2017, further to the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) issued in May 2016, the Centre initiated a participatory review of its activities and planning process.

II. Main results on key thematic priorities

3. The strategic priorities of the Centre align with the thematic areas of the Organizational Management Plan of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for 2014-2017:

(a) Widening the democratic space;

(b) Early warning and protection of human rights in situations of conflict, violence and insecurity;

(c) Strengthening international human rights mechanisms;

(d) Enhancing equality, countering discrimination, combating impunity and strengthening accountability and the rule of law;

(e) Integrating human rights in development and in the economic sphere.

4. From August 2015 to July 2017, the Centre played an important role in building the capacity of various actors, including Governments, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations and United Nations entities. In partnership with the OHCHR Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa, the Centre also engaged in building the capacity of representatives and staff members of regional organizations, such as the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council, as well as the Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions.

5. During the reporting period, there was increased demand for training in relation to the international human rights mechanisms and the promotion and protection of human rights in conflict situations. As the human rights situations and circumstances differ in the 25 countries covered by the Centre, it adapted capacity-building activities to the various and evolving needs and challenges of the region.

A. Widening the democratic space

6. During the reporting period, the Centre played a critical role in providing civil society organizations and human rights defenders with the knowledge and skills necessary to defend and promote human rights. Its capacity-building activities for human rights defenders focused on women human rights defenders and journalists.

7. Since 2013, the Centre, in partnership with the OHCHR regional office in Beirut, has been undertaking a capacity-building programme for women human rights defenders, including four training sessions for 50 women from the Middle East and North Africa. In August 2017, the Centre will organize a capacity-building activity for 20 women human rights defenders.

8. General Assembly resolution 70/161 highlighted the vital work of human rights defenders in promoting, protecting and advocating the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. The Centre strengthened the capacity of human rights defenders in this area, following up on an initial training of trainers on economic, social and cultural rights organized in Doha in October 2015. The training targeted 18 human rights defenders, including 7 women, from nine countries across the Middle East and North Africa. The third phase of the programme will focus on documenting cases of violations of economic, social and cultural rights and will provide the participants with technical and substantive skills to train their colleagues on monitoring such rights and developing strategies to strengthen their work in this area.

9. The World Programme for Human Rights Education stresses the need to promote human rights training for media professionals and journalists. In this regard, and within its yearly celebration of World Press Freedom Day, the Centre, in cooperation with Al-Jazeera Public Liberties and Human Rights Centre and Al-Shuruq Centre for Media, Human Rights and Democracy in Morocco, organized a regional training workshop on a human rights-based approach to the media in Morocco in May 2016. The training was attended by 17 participants, including 5 women, from 10 different countries. The purpose was to enhance their knowledge of human rights standards and principles relating to media freedoms and develop their skills in applying a human rights-based approach to their work.

10. In celebration of World Press Freedom Day in 2017, and in partnership with the Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions and the UNESCO office for the Gulf States and Yemen, the Centre organized a seminar in Doha on the theme "Media's role in advancing peaceful, just and inclusive societies". The event focused mainly on combating hate speech in the media and on the role of journalists in promoting dialogue. It was attended by 50 journalists, including 20 women, and students from Qatar.

11. From 8 to 10 May 2017, in Khartoum, the Centre, in cooperation with the Al-Jazeera Public Liberties and Human Rights Centre and the General Union of Sudanese Journalists, organized a seminar and a training workshop on the theme "The role of the media in promoting peaceful communities and an inclusive platform: reality and challenges of protection efforts". The seminar was attended by 113 Sudanese participants, including 29 women. A key outcome of the seminar was the recognition of the importance of meaningful public participation in the drafting process of a new Sudanese media law. The workshop, for its part, was attended by 109 journalists, including 40 women, and aimed at enhancing their knowledge of human rights and international humanitarian law and standards and of the main international and regional human rights protection mechanisms.

12. Since 2011, the Centre has organized five regional consultations on formal human rights education at the primary, secondary and university levels, with a focus on both the Arab Plan for Human Rights Education (2009-2014) and the second and third phases of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2010-2014 and 2015-2019). On 13 and 14 September 2015, in Doha, the Centre organized a consultation workshop on formal and informal experiences in developing human rights education, which hosted nine experts from ministries of education and academic institutions in Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan and the State of Palestine. The participants identified best practices and challenges in developing and implementing human rights education programmes at the formal and informal levels. Their main recommendations included the need to develop national plans aligned with recommendations by international and regional human rights mechanisms; the importance of partnerships between Governments and civil society

stakeholders; and the need to enhance the capacity of ministries of education in developing curriculums on human rights education.

13. The Centre has developed a coordination mechanism involving several regional and international organizations working on human rights education to strengthen cooperation and related capacity-building activities.

14. The Centre identified a major gap in human rights publications and documentation in Arabic, as well as in other languages spoken in countries covered by the Centre. Since its establishment, the Centre has focused on Arabic-speaking countries. It intends to invest greater efforts in reaching out to non-Arabic-speaking South-West Asian countries in the coming years. For instance, it will develop a web-based information management system to serve the region and provide accessible online human rights resources, including online training programmes targeting youth.

B. Early warning and protection of human rights in situations of conflict, violence and insecurity

15. The Human Rights Council, in its resolution 31/21, affirmed the importance of human rights education and training as a tool to help to prevent terrorism and violent extremism, racial and religious intolerance, genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. During the reporting period, the Centre contributed to conflict prevention efforts in the region by focusing on the right to education in conflict situations and combating hate speech.

16. The four-year project on the protection of the right to education during insecurity and armed conflict in the Middle East and North Africa, implemented by the Centre in partnership with the Education Above All Foundation through its Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict programme, came to an end in December 2016. A formal report[1] was issued upon the completion of the project and is focused on children's rights to education in Egypt, Tunisia and the State of Palestine. The report also reflected the voices of the children and students who participated in the projects to learn about their rights as children, in particular their right to education.

17. Through the project, the Centre provided grants to two civil society organizations active in the Middle East and North Africa: Defence for Children International and the Teacher Creativity Centre. The purpose of the grants was to enhance the role of civil society in ensuring that the right to education was respected and protected in countries affected by conflict. Defence for Children International, through its Middle East and North Africa Desk, implemented a regional project to enhance the right of children to gain access to education in Iraq, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen and the State of Palestine. The project benefited 306 children. The Teacher Creativity Centre implemented a project in the State of Palestine that trained 30 teachers and 30 youth activists on using human rights legal tools and mechanisms to promote the protection of their right to education and to document related violations. In turn, those teachers and activists conducted 118 educational sessions in their respective schools, which benefited a total of 1,050 students, including 560 female students. The students were able to document 56

[1] Courtney Erwin, "These are my rights: students from Palestine, Egypt and Tunisia speak out", study on the protection of the right to education during insecurity and armed conflict in the Middle East and North Africa region, a joint project of the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region and Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict, 2016.

complaints relating to the violation of their right to education and to submit them to relevant authorities. The aforementioned report highlighted the main achievements of the projects and the need for increased international efforts to promote the right to education in situations of conflict and insecurity.

18. In May 2016, in Doha, the Centre organized a meeting on the right to education in the context of insecurity and armed conflict in the Middle East and North Africa involving 18 participants, including 13 women. These included the heads of Defence for Children International and the Teacher Creativity Centre, as well as independent experts in education and representatives of regional and national organizations. The Centre agreed with the Education Above All Foundation on the necessity of a new partnership to further promote the right to education.

19. In July 2016, the English version of the educational website www.protecteducationmena.org was launched by the Centre and the Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict programme of the Education Above All Foundation. The main purpose of the website, which was launched in Arabic in 2014, is to provide information on the protection of the right to education in the context of insecurity and armed conflict in the Middle East and North Africa and on the work of the United Nations system organizations and the "Protect education in insecurity and conflict" project. The website also contains a library of relevant publications and resources on the right to education in times of conflict.

20. On 22 and 23 December 2015, in Doha, the Centre organized, in cooperation with the Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions, a seminar on ways to counter incitement and promote tolerance. The event was held in the framework of the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.[2] The 25 participants, including 6 women, from 11 Arab countries discussed the impact of hate speech on the enjoyment of human rights, as well as best practices in countering hate speech and promoting tolerance. The seminar concluded with three key recommendations: to establish independent civil society bodies to counter hate speech and incitement to hatred; to create departments within national human rights institutions specialized in analysing and documenting hate speech and to build the capacity to notify concerned authorities of such speech; and to carefully identify elements of academic curriculums that refer to incitement of hatred.

21. In July 2017, in Tunis, the Centre organized a regional workshop, in cooperation with the Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions, on the role of such institutions in the prevention of violent extremism. The event was attended by 30 participants, including 10 women, from 12 Arab countries. They discussed the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (see A/70/674) and identified key components of national plans of action to combat violence extremism.

22. On 20 and 21 February 2017, in Doha, OHCHR and the National Human Rights Committee of Qatar organized an international conference on human rights approaches to conflict situations in the Arab region in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Arab Interior Ministers Council, the Arab Maghreb Union, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab Parliament, the League of Arab States and the Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions. The conference brought

[2] See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/RabatPlanOfAction.aspx.

together more than 320 participants, including 73 women, and representatives of regional and international organizations.[3]

23. The conference participants reviewed the role of OHCHR in the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of ongoing developments in the Arab region. Participants also discussed ways to support and develop cooperation with international human rights bodies to follow up on the implementation of the universal periodic review recommendations. The conference further served as a platform for dialogue and information sharing on the roles, achievements and best practices among the various stakeholders. The participants called for further cooperation and coordination with national human rights institutions and civil society organizations to promote and support more effective interaction with national protection systems. They also stressed the role of OHCHR in enhancing the knowledge and skills of competent authorities and civil society actors on the use of international human rights standards and mechanisms.

C. Strengthening the effectiveness of international human rights mechanisms

24. The General Assembly, in its resolution 68/268, reaffirmed that the full and effective implementation of international human rights instruments by States parties was of major importance for the efforts of the United Nations to promote universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms and that the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system was indispensable for the full and effective implementation of such instruments. The Centre initiated a strategic engagement with relevant stakeholders to ensure the effective use of international human rights mechanisms and respect for human rights obligations under the human rights treaties.

25. In this context, OHCHR, in partnership with the National Human Rights Committee of Qatar, organized a regional conference on the role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the promotion and protection of human rights in the Arab region in Doha in January 2016. The conference brought together more than 250 participants, including 63 women, from national and regional organizations, including the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as national human rights institutions, civil society organizations and United Nations entities. The participants recognized the need for further cooperation and coordination between national human rights institutions and civil society organizations to promote and support States' effective interaction with national protection mechanisms. They also stressed the role of OHCHR in enhancing the knowledge and skills of the relevant authorities and civil society actors.

26. Recognizing the important role that diplomats can play in promoting compliance with international human rights standards, and in response to various requests received from Governments and diplomatic missions, since 2012 the Centre has implemented an annual capacity-building programme for diplomats. During the

[3] Other participants included the General Secretariat of the Arab Interior Ministers Council, representatives of the ministries of foreign affairs and justice in the Arab region, the Arab Parliament, human rights commissions and legal committees in the Arab parliaments and advisory councils, chairpersons of national human rights institutions in the region, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, representatives of civil society organizations in the region and non-governmental regional and international human rights institutions, as well as the heads of eight United Nations human rights offices, OHCHR officials and experts, and representatives of research centres.

reporting period, the Centre organized three training sessions for diplomats, including the fourth and fifth annual training workshops for Arab diplomats, in Doha in September 2015 and in Tunis in May 2016, respectively, and the first South-West Asian diplomats' training workshop on human rights and diplomacy, in Bangkok in October 2016. The workshops were attended by 53 participants, including 15 women, from 23 countries and provided them with the knowledge and skills to interact effectively with the United Nations human rights mechanisms.

27. From 27 February to 2 March 2017, in Geneva, OHCHR held a training session on human rights mechanisms for Arab diplomats. For the first time, the training included a visit to a session of the Human Rights Council and meetings with OHCHR staff members supporting various United Nations human rights mechanisms. It involved 22 diplomats, including 8 women, from four countries. The second training for Arab diplomats was conducted in Geneva from 12 to 15 June 2017, with participants from North Africa (6 women and 8 men). Two more training sessions are planned before the end of the year.

28. General Assembly, in its resolution 70/163, commended the support provided by OHCHR to national human rights institutions and encouraged the Office to continue such support. Providing technical support to national human rights institutions is among the main priorities of the Centre, which has been working in close partnership with the 12 accredited national human rights institutions in the region, as well as the Arab and Asia-Pacific networks of national human rights institutions.

29. In February 2017, the Centre signed a memorandum of understanding with the Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions to define the framework of the relation between the two parties and the roles and responsibilities of each. Taking into consideration the priorities of OHCHR in the region, the memorandum of understanding is focused on the following areas of cooperation in support of national human rights institutions in the Arab region:

(a) Developing the capacity and skills of their personnel;

(b) Raising awareness of human rights in the region and disseminating information with a view to promoting a human rights culture within the institutions and at the community level;

(c) Conducting training courses, workshops and conferences to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights;

(d) Conducting joint research on human rights and related issues of mutual interest and concern and engaging in information sharing.

30. On 20 and 21 December 2015, in Doha, the Centre organized a regional workshop on the implementation of recommendations of the United Nations human rights mechanisms. The workshop focused on the role of national human rights institutions in interacting with the United Nations treaty bodies to enhance compliance with States' human rights obligations. It also provided the 20 participants, including 6 women, from 11 national human rights institutions with the knowledge and skills to effectively interact with the human rights mechanisms and to provide support to the States in fulfilling their reporting obligations, in partnership with civil society organizations.

31. On 12 and 13 March 2017, in Doha, OHCHR and the Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions organized training on the United Nations human rights mechanisms and the role of OHCHR, building on the training for Arab diplomats. The training provided 13 participants from nine national human rights

institutions with the knowledge and skills needed to interact effectively with the mechanisms.

D. Enhancing equality, countering discrimination, combating impunity and strengthening accountability and the rule of law

32. In many countries covered by the Centre, discrimination against specific groups of people, including minorities, women and migrants, remains a major challenge. OHCHR is well placed to raise awareness of international standards on the elimination of all forms of discrimination, notably to strengthen the capacity of marginalized groups to enhance their access to justice, thereby supporting grass-roots and community-based organizations in ensuring the accountability of perpetrators of trafficking in persons.

33. Pursuant to the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/293, the Centre identified combating trafficking in persons in the region as one of its main priorities. On the basis of the extensive application of a human rights-based approach to the prevention of and fight against trafficking in persons, the Centre conducted eight capacity-building activities for law enforcement officers, legislators, officials from relevant ministries, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations.

34. In November 2015, in Dubai, the Centre organized a seminar on bridging the gap between national and international legislation on combating trafficking in persons in the Arab world, in cooperation with the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children. The objective was to identify gaps between national legislation and international standards regarding combating trafficking in persons, which participants emphasized the need to harmonize. A total of 25 participants, including 13 women, attended the seminar, including judges, lawyers and representatives of international civil society organizations and national human rights institutions.

35. In September 2016, in Amman, the Centre organized a regional training workshop on the role of national human rights institutions in combating trafficking in persons and in the protection of victims thereof. The event was attended by 20 participants, including 6 women, from 12 different national human rights institutions. Its purpose was to strengthen their skills in promoting and protecting the rights of trafficked persons and in identifying protection gaps. The workshop also addressed the impact of national, regional and international measures to combat trafficking in persons.

E. Integrating human rights in development and in the economic sphere

36. On 19 and 20 April, in Doha, the United Nations Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, in partnership with the Centre, organized the Asia Regional Forum on Business and Human Rights. The Forum attracted some 400 participants from 60 countries, including some 100 women, and discussed various critical issues, including the rights of migrant workers in the country of origin and destination, particularly the situation of female domestic workers; forced and child labour and trafficking in persons; access to remedy through judicial and non-judicial mechanisms; the situation of human rights defenders; the rights of women in a business context; and indigenous peoples' rights.

III. Strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of the Centre

37. Upon request by OHCHR, OIOS conducted an audit of the Centre from October 2015 to January 2016 to evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes in providing reasonable assurance regarding the effective management of operations of the Centre. It covered the period from January 2013 to October 2015, focusing on strategic planning, performance monitoring and the regulatory framework.

38. The report of the audit was issued on 12 May 2016.[4] In response to the OIOS recommendations, the Centre has undergone a fundamental restructuring to ensure the effective management of its operations and to strengthen transparency and compliance with United Nations rules and regulations. Strict procedures are in place to safeguard adherence to the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and the Field Administration Manual. The Centre has also taken on board the programmatic recommendations of OIOS. Most of the security requirements to comply with the United Nations minimum operating security standards will have been in place by the end of 2017.

IV. Conclusions

39. **The Centre has made noticeable progress in the promotion of human rights and advocacy in the region and will continue to strengthen its effectiveness and efficiency in responding to ongoing and emerging needs. On the basis of consultations held with stakeholders,[5] the Centre will also enhance its capacity-building and technical assistance, particularly in conflict and post-conflict countries. The Centre will also ensure that its strategy for 2018-2021 fully reflects its mandate and includes all the 25 countries under its coverage. The Centre will aim to strengthen its support to Governments, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, academics, regional organizations and United Nations entities.**

40. **To reinforce the three components of its mandate as set out in General Assembly resolution 60/153, the Centre will enhance its human rights education programme; further develop training programmes, with particular attention to national human rights institutions and civil society organizations; and continue to improve its documentation and public information services, including through a more accessible website and information system.**

41. **The Centre is fully committed to implementing the OIOS recommendations to ensure greater effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation of its mandate.**

---

[4] Report No. 2016/043. Available from https://oios.un.org/page?slug=report.

[5] In April 2017, the Centre conducted an online survey and in-depth interviews with key partners in the region, which underscored the important role that the Centre could play in addressing key human rights challenges in the region. The survey was completed by 81 professionals from 20 countries.

United Nations A/72/257

General Assembly

Distr.: General
31 July 2017

Original: English

Seventy-second session
Item 22 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Globalization and interdependence: Science, technology and innovation for development

Science, technology and innovation for development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in response to General Assembly resolution 70/213, provides information on the implementation of the resolution, in particular through the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and other relevant United Nations organizations. The report summarizes trends in new and emerging technologies and their impact on sustainable development; showcases lessons learned and good practices from developing countries in strengthening capacities for science, technology and innovation; highlights findings from high-level policy discussions and research on science, technology and innovation as an enabler of sustainable development at the national, regional and global levels; discusses the review of progress made in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society; and highlights initiatives to strengthen the science-policy interface within the United Nations and enhance global support mechanisms for science, technology and innovation.

* A/72/150.

17-13091 (E) 100817

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. The present report responds to General Assembly resolution 70/213, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its seventy-second session, a report on the implementation of the resolution.

2. In its resolution 70/213, adopted 22 December 2015, the General Assembly recognized the vital role that science, technology, and innovation can play in sustainable development, including efforts to eradicate poverty, achieve food security and nutrition, protect the environment, improve education, and support and accelerate economic diversification and transformation.

3. The General Assembly expressed concern that, for the majority of the poor, the promise of science, technology and innovation remains unfulfilled and that many developing countries lack affordable access to information and communications technology (ICT).

4. The General Assembly encouraged the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), along with other United Nations entities, to continue to undertake reviews of policy on science, technology and innovation in order to assist developing countries in identifying measures needed to integrate such policies into their national development strategies.

5. The General Assembly also requested the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to continue its activities relating to science, technology and innovation and provide a forum within which to continue to assist the Economic and Social Council as the focal point in the system-wide follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society.

6. The General Assembly reaffirmed its commitment to leveraging science, technology and innovation, including ICT, for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

7. Governments were encouraged to strengthen and foster investment in research and development, promote the involvement of the business and financial sectors in the development of environmentally sound technologies and mainstream a gender perspective in legislation, policies and programmes to facilitate full and equal access to and participation in science, technology and innovation for women of all ages. Scientific and research and development institutions were encouraged to promote regional, subregional and interregional joint research and development projects, where feasible.

8. The international community was encouraged to support efforts to conduct empirical research on innovation and development, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, facilitate technology transfer on mutually agreed terms and other actions, and support science, technology and innovation partnerships with developing countries in education, business opportunities and infrastructure for science, technology and innovation.

9. In response to the resolution, the present report will summarize trends in new and emerging technologies and their impact on sustainable development; showcase lessons learned and good practices from developing countries in strengthening capacities for science, technology and innovation; highlight findings from high-level policy discussions and research on science, technology and innovation as an enabler of sustainable development at the national, regional and global levels; discuss the review of progress made in implementing outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society; and highlight initiatives to strengthen the

science-policy interface within the United Nations and enhance global support mechanisms for science, technology and innovation.

II. Science, technology and innovation for achieving sustainable development

10. Science, technology and innovation are critical drivers for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and offer the potential for a world of far greater — and more equally shared — economic prosperity, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

11. New and emerging technologies, which are often considered to be part of a fourth industrial revolution, include: the Internet of things, big data, cloud computing, artificial intelligence/robotics/automation, three-dimensional printing, biotechnology, nanotechnology and advanced materials, virtual and augmented reality, and smart energy. The pace of development and adoption of many of those digitally enabled technologies has been accelerated by "Moore's Law",[1] which led to a vast increase in capability at an exponential, non-linear rate and to exponential-price performance improvements throughout much of the digitized realm. The increasing use of digital platforms as a basis for technological convergence may accelerate the pace of technological change and the declining costs in digital products and services (e.g., gene editing, 3D printing, workplace automation). Exponential cost declines are also affecting the energy sector, with dramatic cost decreases in solar power, which has already become cost-competitive with coal and natural gas, as well as electric vehicles and batteries.[2]

12. Although new and emerging technologies offer unprecedented opportunities for addressing pressing global challenges, they can also disrupt labour markets, exacerbate existing socioeconomic inequalities and accelerate environmental degradation. Furthermore, without the requisite infrastructure, human resources and institutional and related capabilities for benefiting from such technologies, many developing countries may not be able to harness the positive potential of such technologies for sustainable development.

13. The Commission on Science and Technology for Development, as the United Nations focal point for science, technology and innovation for development, plays a significant role in analysing how science, technology and innovation, including ICT, serve as enablers in the 2030 Agenda by acting as a forum for strategic planning, sharing lessons learned and best practices and providing foresight about critical trends in science, technology and innovation in key sectors of the economy, as well as drawing attention to emerging and disruptive technologies.

14. In this regard, the Commission devoted its nineteenth and twentieth sessions, in 2016 and 2017, to critically examining how new and emerging technologies,

[1] "Moore's Law," named after Intel co-founder Gordon Moore, is the observation that approximately every 18-24 months the number of transistors in a dense integrated circuit doubles.

[2] Furthermore, recent findings show a strong tendency, across different types of technologies (including chemical, hardware, energy and others) towards exponential growth rates in production and exponential decreases in cost. However, it has been argued that governmental and regulatory policies, as well as the unique cost and performance characteristics of specific technologies, may result in certain families of technologies not exhibiting the exponential cost declines reflected in digital technologies. See, for example, Béla Nagy and others, "Statistical Basis for Predicting Technological Progress", *PLoS ONE*, vol. 8, No. 2 (February 2013); and Philip Ball, "Moore's law is not just for computers: mathematical laws can predict industrial growth and productivity in many sectors", *Nature* (March 2013).

along with existing scientific and technical applications, could support the efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In order to promote synergy with the Goals, as reviewed by the high-level political forum on sustainable development on an annual basis, the Commission analysed the role of science, technology and innovation in the achievement of Goal 2 on food security and Goal 11 on sustainable cities. Moreover, the Commission sought to understand how key considerations for applying technology in development, including technology foresight and assessment, innovative financing, the application of a gender lens to science, technology and innovation, and regional and international cooperation, can ensure that no one is left behind.

A. New and emerging digital technologies

15. Two key features of new and emerging technologies have been digitization and connectivity. With the entire global population rapidly becoming connected through mobile Internet, new opportunities are expanding for exploiting the vast array of new and emerging digitally enabled exponential technologies to address the efforts towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Drawing on an analysis of four technology megatrends, namely big data and the Internet of things, three-dimensional printing, and digital automation, the Commission identified the potential of such technologies to accelerate the achievement of the Goals.

16. Across various domains, big data and the Internet of things have roles to play in advancing the sustainable development agenda, including through the provision of mobile-enabled microinsurance for farmers, mapping data that supports the allocation of medicine and mobilization of health teams to respond to disease outbreaks, devices powered by the Internet of things for smarter water management and monitoring progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

17. The Commission concluded that some countries, especially the least developed countries, may not have the data infrastructure, capacity or skills to support such applications. Furthermore, the Commission discussed how Internet access, privacy, security and consumer rights may be critical issues to be understood and addressed in order to minimize possible risks associated with such technologies.

18. Additive manufacturing, or three-dimensional printing, involves creating physical products by iteratively layering desired material into a three-dimensional structure. Applications for such printing are vast, including in enterprise development, environmental sustainability, housing and construction and education. However, the technology presents a number of challenges, including potential disruption of employment and trade patterns, environmental effects in terms of energy consumption and their reliance on plastics as inputs, and implications for intellectual property, data privacy and protection.

19. Digital automation and artificial intelligence refer to the ability of computers to increasingly take over tasks related to cognitive and not just physical work. The automation of work has historically and in contemporary times had significant implications for government policy on employment, labour markets and overall economic policies. On the positive side, it means that machines can do the routine, predictable work, freeing people to be more creative and productive. However, it could also lead to a rise in unemployment in certain economic sectors, both in developed and developing countries.

20. The Commission developed a number a policy lessons to effectively harness new and emerging digital technologies for sustainable development. First, the basic requirements for taking advantage of ICT are still pertinent. Both old and new technologies have the potential to create economic and social opportunities or

exacerbate socioeconomic divides and it is important to continue to address the fundamentals of development policy. In addition, responding to the local context and harnessing local skills are fundamental to maximizing the benefits of ICT. Furthermore, such digital technologies as big data, the Internet of things and automation present significant challenges in relation to the protection, sharing and stewardship of data, and policymakers should strike the appropriate balance between promoting innovation and safeguarding citizens' rights.

B. Science, technology and innovation for achieving Goals 2 and 11

21. The Sustainable Development Goals have been adopted at a critical juncture in the international development discourse, where social inclusion and environmental sustainability are prioritized alongside economic development. With the vision of "no one must be left behind", the 2030 Agenda has raised the bar and demands unprecedented actions and efforts. It is clear that in the new global development agenda, islands of prosperity surrounded by poverty, injustice, climate change and environmental degradation are viewed as neither sustainable nor acceptable.

22. For the global community, such ambitious goals will be practically impossible to achieve by 2030 without a paradigm shift that incorporates the effective, widespread and inclusive application of technology and innovative ideas. In this context, the Commission analysed how new innovation approaches can support the achievement of the Goals more broadly and how science, technology and innovation can address two specific Goals, namely, Goal 2 on food security and Goal 11 on sustainable cities.

1. Goal 2: zero hunger by 2030

23. New innovation approaches, along with new applications of science, technology and innovation, can potentially play a critical role in achieving global food security. About 795 million people are undernourished, a ratio of 1 in every 9 persons, with the majority living in developing countries and rural areas. Efforts towards the achievement of Goal 2, zero hunger, are challenged by a number of factors, including climate change, access to food and water, soil degradation and desertification, changes in dietary patterns, expanding populations and low or slowing productivity growth. Smallholder farmers are disproportionately affected because of their limited access to food and financial resources.

24. The Commission discussed how science, technology and innovation can address the multidimensional nature of food security, which covers: (a) food availability, (b) access to food, (c) food utilization and use, and (d) food stability. Examples include: genetic modification and irrigation technologies for improving agricultural productivity; post-harvest and agroprocessing technologies that address food accessibility; biofortification that helps to make food more nutritious; and climate-smart solutions, including the use of precision agriculture and early warning systems, for mitigating food instability. Furthermore, new and emerging technologies, including synthetic biology, artificial intelligence and tissue engineering, could have implications for the future of crop and livestock agriculture.

25. The Commission agreed that in order to take advantage of the transformative potential of technology, an innovative ecosystem, supporting mechanisms and infrastructure are critical for enabling the agricultural innovation needed to eradicate hunger by 2030. Key areas for policy consideration include nurturing agricultural innovation ecosystems, making innovative investments in agriculture and promoting regional and international cooperation.

26. Harnessing science and technology for food security requires an agricultural ecosystem of innovation, encompassing farmers, agricultural research and education systems, agricultural extension systems, agricultural innovation policies and investments, agricultural value chain actors and organizations, as well as the links among them. Designing and strengthening an agricultural innovation system involves promoting research and development, investing in infrastructure, building human capacity, creating an enabling environment and strengthening knowledge flows, among scientists and farmers in particular. In that context, the Commission encouraged Member States to create coherent policy frameworks that encourage interministerial coordination for food security, to provide an enabling framework for agricultural innovation and to establish appropriate regulatory frameworks.

27. As a key component of strengthening the agricultural ecosystem for innovation, the Commission recommended that Member States increase investment in high-quality research that is adapted to the needs of smallholder farmers. The Commission encouraged countries to consider linking their national agricultural research institutions with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers, in order to create new education and research programmes that support agricultural innovation.

28. Another key policy area is that of promoting regional and international cooperation for agricultural innovation and food security. Knowledge aid can be a tool for providing support in science, technology and innovation as part of official development assistance. This can occur in the agricultural sectors, where donors can contribute to agricultural research and development, especially in the least developed countries. With respect to stimulating industry and infrastructure, knowledge aid as part of official development assistance can focus on value-chain development schemes (e.g., agroprocessing), complementing foreign direct investment and the development of linkages, project funding for industrial and physical infrastructure, the promotion of global engineering associations and non-governmental organizations and the facilitation of South-South collaboration in agricultural innovation.

2. Goal 11: smart cities and infrastructure

29. The Commission also explored how science, technology and innovation can play a critical role in the design, development and management of smart cities to make human settlements in urban areas safe, comfortable, resilient and sustainable. More than half of the global population resides in cities. Current urbanization trends suggest that by 2030, 60 per cent of the world's population will live in cities. By 2050, this estimate will increase to two thirds. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the importance of that trend in Goal 11, on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

30. Smart, sustainable cities are innovative cities that use ICT to increase the efficiency of urban services and operations and improve quality of life in ways that ensure economic, social and environmental sustainability. Examples of smart applications include smart buildings that improve the comfort of the users and optimize the usage of utilities, as well as smart energy systems that utilize smart grids and energy management techniques at the household and community levels to optimize energy usage and distribution. Other examples include smart water supply, smart waste management, smart mobility and smart health.

31. The Commission identified five challenges related to smart cities and infrastructure, especially in the context of developing countries, and discussed the role of the science, technology and innovation community in overcoming those

challenges. First, smart infrastructure should be locally relevant and respond to local development needs. Second, the design, management and maintenance of smart infrastructure require new knowledge and skills and the Commission highlighted the need for a better understanding of the types of knowledge and skills required, as well as of the skills deficit, especially in developing countries.

32. A third issue is finance and the need for well-developed business models to implement smart infrastructure. Smart infrastructure projects require the pooling of public and private resources through creative financing and carefully designed public-private partnership models. A fourth challenge related to smart cities is governance. The Commission debated how to break down the silos across different government departments and balance top-down approaches to governance with bottom-up models that ensure the active involvement of citizens. The fifth issue the Commission deliberated was how to make smart cities inclusive. The Commission presented several examples of the innovative use of open platforms and applications to engage citizens in city planning and management, support communities from informal settlements, make urban planning gender-sensitive and engage the disabled and elderly communities.

33. The Commission concluded its discussion of those challenges with a review of general design principles that may guide smart infrastructure projects. First, smart infrastructure should be people-centred, rather than technology-centred. Second, smart infrastructure should be resilient to threats posed by such factors as climate change, extreme weather events and increased urban density. Third, smart infrastructure projects should be flexible, so as to allow for future upgrading and continuous improvement and ensure interoperability with other smart infrastructure components. Finally, smart infrastructure, owing to its inherent connected structure and digital components, opens up new risks related to data security and vulnerability to cyberattacks. Cities should invest in appropriate risk mitigation and safety strategies.

C. New innovation approaches to leave no one behind

34. Ensuring that no one is left behind requires an inclusive approach to the application of science, technology and innovation in development. In this context, the Commission analysed five approaches to innovation: pro-poor and inclusive innovation; grass-roots innovation; mission-oriented innovation (e.g., grand challenges and prizes); innovation with social purposes; and digitally enabled open and collaborative innovation. These new innovation approaches seek to solve problems generally not addressed by markets or the public sector, and they largely extend the number of actors participating in the innovation processes.

35. Greater use of the Internet, digital technologies and social networks have allowed for faster learning, enabled the co-creation of knowledge and provided widespread access to tools, data and resources to solve problems at a faster pace than would have been possible through the use of traditional ways to organize innovation. Such developments have significantly contributed to the experimentation with new ways to conduct innovation. Approaches that broaden innovation processes can involve the poor, as co-creators of technologies, as well as grass-roots and local communities in the development of new forms of knowledge and technological artefacts.

36. The Commission developed a number of recommendations to catalyse the use of those new innovation approaches to drive the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Commission proposed that Member States consider adopting policy mixes across various government actors that enable hybrid forms of

traditional, pro-poor, grass-roots and social innovation, while prioritizing innovation that is both socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable. The Commission encouraged countries to recognize and support the knowledge of local communities and local populations in innovation processes and to support efforts to commercialize and scale up locally developed innovations. The Commission supported the mainstreaming of corporate social responsibility policies in the private sector that reflect inclusive and sustainable innovation to meet the Goals. Finally, the international community was encouraged to provide networking opportunities and facilitate matchmaking between local innovative solutions and private-sector actors or policymakers who can work on scaling up and deploying new innovations.

D. Key considerations in applying science, technology and innovation in sustainable development

37. In order to ensure the appropriate and inclusive application of science, technology and innovation for sustainable development, the trade-off between the benefits and risks of applying science, technology and innovation for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals must be evaluated carefully, through technology foresight and assessment. A "gender lens", reflecting the aims, concerns, situations and abilities of both women and men, should be applied in all aspects of related policymaking. Regional and international cooperation should be promoted to build national capacities for science, technology and innovation and to support the networking and collaboration of researchers and innovators on issues of regional and global concern. Finally, financial and other resources should be made available to support the application of innovation for sustainable development.

1. Technology foresight and assessment

38. Throughout the 2016 and 2017 sessions, the Commission analysed the role of technology foresight and assessment in providing countries with the knowledge needed to evaluate the developmental potential of existing, new and emerging technologies. Technology foresight is the process of forecasting the evolution of technologies and their impact on society, with a view to developing policy within Governments or strategy within firms. Technology foresight is related to technology assessment, which was extensively developed in the 1960s and coincided with the rise of the environmental movement during the same period. The notion that policymakers needed informed, objective information on the potential benefits and risks of new technologies became more prominent in international institutions and national governments. Managing risks and public perceptions of science, technology and innovation are essential to harnessing them for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

39. The Commission encouraged countries to explore ways and means of conducting national, regional and international technology assessment and foresight exercises on existing, new and emerging technologies and their implications for sustainable development. It was suggested that Member States link foresight and assessment exercises to the implementation of the Goals and to discussions about models of governance for new areas of scientific and technological development. The international community was encouraged to conduct foresight and assessment initiatives on global and regional challenges at regular intervals and cooperate towards the establishment of a mapping system to review and share technology foresight and assessment outcomes. It was also recommended that the international community raise awareness and facilitate networking and partnerships among various technology foresight and assessment organizations and networks, in

collaboration with other stakeholders. Finally, the Commission encouraged structured debate among all stakeholders, including representatives of government, science, industry, civil society and the private sector, in particular, small and medium-sized enterprises, towards: (a) considering the perspectives of the multiple stakeholders involved; (b) creating a shared understanding of risks, potential benefits and long-term issues; and (c) building consensus on future policies.

40. The Commission was encouraged to continue to provide a forum for the sharing of, among other things, best practices, the results of foresight exercises, successful local innovation models, case studies and experiences regarding the use of science, technology and innovation and ICT for sustainable development. Furthermore, UNCTAD was encouraged to look into the feasibility of including elements of strategic foresight and digital ecosystem assessment in policy reviews of science, technology and innovation and ICT, possibly by including a chapter dedicated to these themes in such reviews.

2. Applying a gender lens to science, technology and innovation

41. As the only functional commission of the Economic and Social Council with a Gender Advisory Board, the Commission continues to analyse the gender implications of applying innovation and knowledge in the service of sustainable development. While Goal 5 is specifically directed at gender equality (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), the Commission recognized that there are gender dimensions across the Goals and a need to target strategies regarding science, technology and innovation in keeping with this reality.

42. There are at least four dimensions to a gender analysis of initiatives to apply science, technology and innovation for sustainable development. First, there is a need to identify where the applications thereof can improve the lives of women and men, girls and boys. Second, it is critical to identify and consider the gender dimensions of research and development, how agendas and priorities are set and how costs and benefits are distributed across populations, including to women and men, girls and boys. Third, it is important to explore the opportunities and to expand the roles of women in order for them to contribute to the human capital needed to advance science, technology and innovation for development, thereby adding to the number of women active in those fields and adding their perspectives thereon to those of men. Fourth, there is an urgent need to develop metrics and assessment tools that can produce data that are sufficiently disaggregated to determine the impacts of science, technology and innovation for development on women and men, girls and boys, and appropriately matrixed to track progress and interactions across Goals.

43. In order to address the ongoing and persistent gender gap in the fields of science, technology and innovation as a whole, and of science, technology, engineering and mathematics education in particular, the Commission encouraged efforts to mentor, attract and retain women and girls in education and research in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The Commission's Gender Advisory Board has been involved in an international initiative, known as "GenderInSITE" that promotes the role of women in science, innovation, technology and engineering and demonstrates that applying a gender lens to those areas can help to improve the effectiveness of development programmes.

3. Financing innovation for development

44. Achieving the Goals requires addressing a range of resource constraints, including those relating to financial, technological and skills aspects, as well as in other areas. Financing research and innovation on the basis of specific missions

(e.g., renewable energy, development of vaccines or diagnostic tests for developing countries, agricultural innovations, etc.) can incentivize collaboration among different stakeholders. It is important for policymakers to understand the underlying monetary and non-monetary motivations that drive innovators and to design incentives that consider such motivations. Key policy considerations in this area are the choice of economic instruments used (for example, prizes or advance market commitments) and their design; the combination of vertical and horizontal mechanisms for funding; opportunities for combining financing from all sources (including government and private sector sources and national and international sources); and the process used for identifying priorities.

45. The Commission recommended support for policies that increase financial inclusion, deepen the sources of financing and direct investments towards innovations that address the Goals. In that context, it was recommended that countries provide incentives to private and public investors for impact investment, the commercialization of research and development, increased venture capital funding and the establishment of technology parks and incubators. The Commission was encouraged to discuss and explore innovative financing models, such as impact investment, as a means of attracting new stakeholders, innovators and sources of investment capital for science, technology, engineering and innovation-based solutions, in collaboration with other organizations, where appropriate.

4. Regional and international cooperation

46. The Commission acknowledged the importance of supporting the policies and activities of developing countries in the fields of science and technology through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation in the areas of financial and technical assistance, capacity-building and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms and conditions, as well as technical training programmes or courses.

47. The Commission encouraged the facilitation of university-to-university collaborations involving student and faculty exchanges, two-way mobility and cooperative research aimed primarily at increasing capacities for science, technology and innovation and the cross-border flow of talent in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics for sustainable development. In order to contribute to alleviating the constraints faced by developing countries, especially the least developed countries and small island developing States, the Commission proposed the creation of a resource access hub in support of the Sustainable Development Goals, a vehicle that would be the repository of projects, data, financing mechanisms, technological advances and directories of experts as well as for sharing success stories, difficulties and obstacles encountered by countries.

48. The Commission also recommended the establishment of international needs-based partnerships, where countries and their private sectors can collaborate on research and development, including the commercialization of research results, to address similar development challenges.

III. Building capacity for science, technology and innovation

49. Applying science, technology and innovation to the sustainable development agenda requires scientific and technological capacities. To that end, United Nations system entities work with developing countries to integrate science, technology and innovation into national development strategies; support capacity-building to develop statistics and indicators for measuring innovation and the knowledge economy; build competencies to help policymakers design and implement policies

relating to science, technology and innovation; strengthen ICT capacities to facilitate digital inclusion, implement ICT applications and promote e-commerce in developing countries; and facilitate technology transfer and build the capacities of countries to harness intellectual property for sustainable development.

A. Integrating policies on science, technology and innovation within national development strategies

50. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development completed science, technology and innovation policy reviews of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in 2016, and of Rwanda, in 2017, and presented the results of both reviews at the twentieth session of the Commission. Such reviews support national governments in their efforts to integrate policies for science, technology and innovation into their national development strategies.

51. One noteworthy finding of the reviews was the need for policies to leverage science, technology and innovation as part of the diversification of productive structures. In that regard, the reviews found that dedicated efforts to support knowledge-based firms could deliver positive results in emerging industries, such as nanotechnology in the Islamic Republic of Iran or ICT in Rwanda. However, replicating the experience in more traditional industries and sectors was a significant challenge. Successful high-technology innovation loci, such as ICT industry innovation hubs and centres of excellence, could be helpful in stepping up the development of technological receptiveness throughout the entire economy. It was a common finding of the reviews that, outside of high-technology sectors, the business culture tended to be more conservative and incentives for investment and technological upgrading might be insufficient.

52. Another common finding of the reviews was that policy relating to science, technology and innovation needs to strengthen innovative interactions among stakeholders in order to make development more inclusive and improve sustainability. Such a move would involve technology demand-side measures targeting firms and entrepreneurs and supported through national academic research and international cooperation, thereby facilitating a greater involvement of women and youth, and carefully designed public-private partnerships for supporting innovative and technology-led ventures.

53. It was also stressed in the reviews that the development of strong national innovation capabilities is important for creating a comparative advantage that supports sustainable development. In that respect, countries needed effective funding mechanisms for science, technology and innovation, as well as to more effectively leverage international trade and investment linkages.

54. The experience of UNCTAD in the implementation of such reviews points to the need for a more broadly shared approach to innovation policy for development among public sector officials and other stakeholders. The response to that need forms the rationale for a new innovation policy learning programme launched by UNCTAD to provide training on key areas in collaboration with local training and policy institutions.

B. Developing statistics, indicators and data for innovation

1. Partnership on Measuring Information and Communication Technology for Development

55. The Partnership on Measuring Information and Communication Technology for Development has been working since 2004 to increase the availability of internationally comparable data on ICT and to build the capacity of national statistical offices to produce such data for evidence-based policymaking. The Partnership is composed of 14 United Nations and other entities, and reports every two years to the Statistical Commission.

56. The Partnership is contributing to the monitoring of six indicators to the monitoring framework for the Sustainable Development Goals (see E/CN.3/2017/2, annex II) and launched a task group on ICT for the Sustainable Development Goals in June 2017 that will propose a thematic list of ICT indicators, along with methodological guidelines, as a subset of the thematic list on indicators on science, technology and innovation being developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics (also a member of the Partnership).

57. In addition, the partners continue their capacity-building work with national statistical offices and producers of official statistics on ICT in developing countries, in the form of courses, workshops and manuals. The Partnership also identifies areas where data disaggregated by sex exist or would be desirable, and the methodological work needed in order to develop relevant indicators to fill the data gaps. The partners also conduct research and analysis based on ICT statistics in their respective areas of competence.

2. Development of indicators on science, technology and innovation

58. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, through the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, is actively engaged in the development of indicators on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, including contributions to the revision of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Frascati Manual on measuring research and development (target 9.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals) as well as the OECD/Eurostat Oslo Manual on measuring innovation. The Institute has also contributed to the collection of ocean science data, which have been included in the Global Ocean Science Report and which inform target 14.a of the Goals.

59. The Institute, in partnership with the Division of Science Policy and Capacity-Building of UNESCO, is developing better measures of gender equality in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, through its science, technology, engineering and mathematics and gender advancement project. The project contributes to targets 4.3, 5.5, 5.c, 9.5 and 17.18 of the Goals. While the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development has a section devoted to the critical role of science, technology, innovation and capacity-building in achieving the Goals, in the global indicator framework there are very few indicators on science, technology and innovation.[3] Therefore, the Institute is currently developing a thematic list of relevant indicators for the Goals.

60. The Institute is supporting countries in the collection of indicators on science, technology and innovation through regional workshops and technical assistance at

[3] For more information, please see: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/.

the national level. A capacity-building package has been developed, which can be implemented by countries that are starting or expanding their measurement efforts.

3. Big data indicators for sustainable development

61. The Global Pulse initiative works to implement and promote opportunities to use big data and artificial intelligence for development and humanitarian action through a two-pronged strategy, in which it functions both as an innovation driver and as a catalyst for the formation of a new data ecosystem.

62. In its role as innovation driver, Global Pulse provides joint innovation as a service to national institutions and United Nations system entities for developing, piloting and evaluating applications of new data to inform development and humanitarian outcomes. In its role as a data ecosystem catalyst, Global Pulse works to foster an enabling environment for using new sources of data by developing regulatory frameworks and standards, connecting research communities, enabling capacity-building and driving policy work. In order to gain access to and use the vast amounts of data that the private sector owns, Global Pulse engages a growing number of companies in data philanthropy, whereby companies grant access to data, technology tools and resources to the public sector for projects for the public good.

63. Global Pulse is involved in a number of projects that aim to support the official statistics community in indicator measurement in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, Global Pulse is a member of four task teams of the Statistical Commission Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics.

4. Global Innovation Index

64. The Global Innovation Index is co-published by Cornell University, INSEAD and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). In addition to providing a ranking of innovation performance in 130 countries, the index seeks to identify policies that foster environments conductive to innovation.

65. Every year, the Global Innovation Index model is updated and revised on the basis of the latest knowledge on innovation systems theory and a thorough review of available indicators, as well as on the basis of readership feedback from the international community and users of the index (policymakers, academia, practitioners, etc.).

66. Developing countries increasingly design policies intended to improve their innovation capacity. Aside from the yearly rankings, the Global Innovation Index identifies best practices of countries that consistently overperform when compared with those of a similar level of development, providing inspiration from innovation leaders and champions. The index results also offer the possibility of making intraregional and intra-income group comparisons, which provide a more realistic basis for action.

5. Indicators on telecommunications and information and communications technology

67. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) collects telecommunication/ICT data for about 200 economies worldwide, covering over 100 indicators. The indicators can be divided into three key sets of data: telecommunication/ICT infrastructure and access data; data on entry-level prices to ICT services; and data on access to and use of ICT by households and individuals.

68. The definitions of indicators are discussed and agreed in the Expert Group on Telecommunication/ICT Indicators and in the Expert Group on ICT Household Indicators. ITU has in recent years produced two key documents supporting

countries in the collection of such data: the Handbook for the Collection of Administrative Data on Telecommunications/ICT and the Manual for Measuring ICT Access and Use by Households and Individuals.

69. The International Telecommunication Union is actively supporting the monitoring of efforts to achieve the Goals and is responsible for five indicators in the monitoring framework. In addition, ITU assists governments in developing countries in their ICT data collection and dissemination efforts through capacity-building technical workshops.

C. Strengthening capacity in information and communications technology

1. eTrade for All

70. Launched in July 2016 by UNCTAD, eTrade for All is a global initiative that helps developing countries engage in and benefit from e-commerce. It is organized around seven key policy areas of particular relevance to e-commerce development, ranging from e-commerce assessments to ICT infrastructure and services, payments and logistics, legal and regulatory frameworks, skills development and financing for e-commerce.

71. At the heart of the initiative is the eTrade for All platform (etradeforall.org), a new information hub launched in April 2017 that helps countries navigate the supply of technical and financial services available to drive development through e-commerce. Through the platform, countries can connect with potential partners, learn about trends and best practices, access up-to-date e-commerce data and be informed of upcoming e-commerce events. As part of the initiative, readiness assessments provide a rapid analysis of the current e-commerce situation in the seven key areas and identify opportunities and obstacles that can be addressed with appropriate policy measures. The new initiative has received significant interest from the least developed countries and from potential donor countries.

72. As of May 2017, eTrade for All encompasses 23 partners from international and regional organizations, national entities and development banks. With the aim of fostering inclusive development, the initiative also works in close cooperation with a private sector-led advisory council, Business for eTrade Development, that encompasses more than 30 large corporations and small businesses from both developed and developing countries.

2. Promoting digital inclusion

73. The International Telecommunication Union has a work programme that includes a focus on the digital inclusion of women and girls, youth, children, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples. ITU focuses on ICT accessibility policies and practices for persons with disabilities in line with article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A model ICT accessibility policy report was developed to guide ICT policymakers in developing their own national ICT accessibility policies focusing on mobile, web, television and public access centre accessibility, along with the public procurement of accessible ICT.

74. The International Telecommunication Union is also leading the digital skills thematic area of the Global Initiative for Decent Jobs for Youth, a global initiative of more than 20 United Nations system entities led by ILO. ITU also leads the International Girls in ICT Day campaign to encourage more girls and young women to prepare for and take up ICT careers. To date, the programme has reached more than 300,000 girls and young women in over 160 countries. Finally, training is

provided to indigenous leaders on using ICT for their own social and economic empowerment.

3. Information and communications technology applications and services for sustainable development

75. Information and communications technology applications and services are an important demand-side driver that can encourage the adoption of broadband services. The capacity of States members of ITU to develop national e-strategies to foster an enabling environment for scaling up ICT applications was built in the area of e-health through a high-level joint ITU-World Health Organization digital health policy dialogue, technical assistance on national e-health strategies, and the development of a toolkit and implementation guidelines for a digital health platform. In the area of e-agriculture, a joint ITU-FAO e-agriculture strategy guide was published and regional workshops and an e-agriculture solutions forum were organized by ITU and FAO. In the area of e-learning, UNESCO and ITU held a policy forum on mobile learning and published a policy note on mobile learning.

76. The capacity of countries to leverage ICT and/or mobile applications to improve the delivery of value-added services was improved through the public-private deployment of innovative ICT applications that provide effective solutions to a variety of challenges for sustainable development, including a global joint initiative known as "Be he@lthy, be mobile", with mobile health programmes on smoking cessation, diabetes, cervical cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease launched in multiple countries. Awareness was raised among ITU members and advocacy conducted on ICT for the development of best practices on smart cities and smart ICT for sustainable development.

D. Facilitating technology transfer for sustainable development

77. The World Intellectual Property Organization, in cooperation with national and regional industrial property offices, supports the establishment and development of technology and innovation support centres, which are designed to provide innovators in developing countries with access to locally based, high quality technology information services and other related services.[4] To date, there are 60 States members of WIPO implementing national projects to develop networks of technology and innovation support centres and over 600 individual such centres within those networks.

78. In order to support the development of technology and innovation support centres and raise awareness of intellectual property and technology information among local stakeholders, national planning and training events are organized on site, focusing on accessing and effectively using patent and scientific and technical journal databases, as well as on promoting the sharing of best practices and experiences. In order to further strengthen online training and encourage the exchange of experiences, a knowledge management platform, known as "eTISC", provides social media tools and integrates new services aimed at reinforcing WIPO activities in supporting the development of such centres worldwide, including specially targeted e-learning modules, tutorials and webinars.

79. Two public-private partnership programmes facilitate access to subscription-based databases. The Access to Research for Development and Innovation programme provides access to scientific and technical information in developing

[4] For more information, see www.wipo.int/tisc.

countries.[5] It offers access to over 28,000 peer-reviewed scientific and technical journals and e-books, with over 900 user institutions currently registered. The Access to Specialized Patent Information programme is a similar public-private partnership with the world's major commercial patent database vendors, providing access to more advanced and sophisticated search and analysis tools for use by institutions in developing countries and in the least developed countries.[6]

IV. Implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

80. In accordance with the mandate of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, most recently in their resolutions 2017/21 and 70/125, respectively, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development serves as the focal point in the system-wide follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society. In 2016 and 2017, the Commission's work on the topic covered three main areas: (a) reporting on the follow-up to the World Summit outcomes; (b) promoting dialogue and building consensus on furthering the implementation of the World Summit; and (c) supporting the work of the Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation, established as a follow-up to the overall review of the implementation of World Summit outcomes carried out in 2015.

A. Follow-up to the World Summit outcomes

81. In 2015, the General Assembly carried out an overall review of the implementation of World Summit outcomes. The review concluded with a high-level meeting, held on 15 and 16 December 2016 in New York. In the outcome document of that meeting, the General Assembly assessed progress to date, identified gaps and challenges and made recommendations for the future on ICT for development, bridging digital divides, the enabling environment, financial mechanisms, human rights, building confidence and security in ICT, and Internet governance (see A/70/125).

82. The General Assembly requested the holding of a high-level meeting on the overall review of the implementation of World Summit outcomes in 2025, involving the input and participation of all stakeholders, to take stock of progress on the outcomes of the World Summit and identify areas of continued focus and challenges. The Assembly recommended that the outcome of the high-level meeting form an input into the review process for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

83. In 2016 and 2017, the Secretary-General issued reports on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels (see A/71/67-E/2016/51 and Corr.1 and A/72/64-E/2017/12).[7]

[5] For more information, see www.wipo.int/ardi.

[6] For more information, see www.wipo.int/aspi.

[7] See A/71/67-E/2016/51, footnote 1, and A/72/64-E/2017/12, footnote 1 for the lists of entities that contributed to the reports.

B. Promoting dialogue and building consensus on furthering the implementation of the World Summit outcomes

84. At its nineteenth and twentieth sessions, the Commission discussed developments and trends related to the World Summit. During those sessions, the Commission welcomed the remarkable evolution and diffusion of ICT but expressed concerns that there remained significant digital divides, such as between and within countries and between women and men, which needed to be addressed. In that context, the Commission underscored the need to urgently address the growing digital divides in the availability, affordability and use of broadband and the quality of access thereto. It also emphasized the importance of promoting an inclusive information society, taking into account the considerations of developing countries, gender and culture, as well as youth and other underrepresented groups.

C. Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation

85. In the outcome document of the high-level meeting on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit, the General Assembly requested the Chair of the Commission, through the Economic and Social Council, to establish a working group to develop recommendations on how to further implement enhanced cooperation as envisioned in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, with the full involvement of all relevant stakeholders. The Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation will submit a report to the Commission at its twenty-first session, in 2018. The Working Group has met three times since its establishment, between September 2016 and May 2017. The fourth meeting of the Working Group will take place in September 2017 in Geneva.[6]

V. Strengthening the science-policy interface and enhancing global support mechanisms for science, technology and innovation

A. Strengthening the United Nations science-policy interface

86. The Scientific Advisory Board of the Secretary-General produced a report entitled "The future of scientific advice to the United Nations, a summary report", in September 2016. The report calls for a greater place for science in international decision-making and calls on all countries, including the poorest, to invest at least 1 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) on research and urge the most advanced countries to spend at least 3 per cent of GDP on research and development. In the report, the Board argues that such efforts must also focus on reinforcing science education, notably in developing countries, and on improving access for girls to science courses.

87. In paragraph 83 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States agreed that "the high-level political forum will also be informed by the *Global Sustainable Development Report*, which shall strengthen the science-policy interface and could provide a strong evidence-based instrument to support policymakers in promoting poverty eradication and sustainable development". The 2016 *Global Sustainable Development Report* builds upon the 2014 and 2015 reports. The report was an assessment of assessments, documenting and describing

[6] For more information on the Working Group, see http://unctad.org/en/Pages/CSTD/WGEC-2016-to-2018.aspx.

the landscape of information on specific issues or nexuses of issues. Its theme was "Ensuring that no one is left behind".

88. In July 2016, Member States agreed on the future scope, frequency and methodology for the *Global Sustainable Development Report* (see E/HLS/2016/1, annex). A comprehensive, in-depth report will be produced every four years to inform the high-level political forum convened under the auspices of the General Assembly. The next report will be published in 2019. Member States requested the creation of an independent group of scientists to draft the report, supported by a task team comprised of relevant United Nations system entities.

B. Technology Facilitation Mechanism

89. The Technology Facilitation Mechanism, established as part of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and reaffirmed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is composed of: a United Nations inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, including the 10-member group of representatives from civil society, the private sector and the scientific community; a collaborative multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals; and an online platform.

90. The first multi-stakeholder forum was held on 6 and 7 June 2016 at United Nations Headquarters and addressed the topic "Realizing the potential of science, technology and innovation for all to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals". The second forum was held on 15 and 16 May 2017 at United Nations Headquarters. In addition to cross-cutting themes, the 2017 forum dedicated sessions to Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14, so as to promote coherence with the high-level political forum. The online platform will serve as a gateway for information on existing initiatives, mechanisms and programmes on science, technology and innovation, within and beyond the United Nations.

91. The first meeting of the 10-member group to support the Mechanism was convened on 3 and 4 March 2016 at United Nations Headquarters, to discuss the preparation for the 2016 forum and the online platform. The group held an expert group meeting on 25 and 26 January 2017, in Paris to prepare for the 2017 forum and discuss possible next steps and inputs for development of the online platform.

C. Global mechanisms for supporting science, technology and innovation

92. In the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action), adopted in 2011, Member States called for the establishment of a Technology Bank to help improve the least developed countries' scientific research and innovation base, promote networking among researchers and research institutions, and help the least developed countries access and utilize critical technologies.

93. Since 2011, the initiative has been supported by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and reaffirmed as a priority in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, as well as in Goal 17 of the 2030 Agenda.

94. The Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries was established by the General Assembly, in its resolution 71/251 of 23 December 2016. The Technology Bank is expected to begin operations in 2017, with its headquarters in

Turkey. The Technology Bank will be financed by voluntary contributions from Member States and other stakeholders, including foundations and the private sector. The Technology Bank reports annually to the Assembly and is guided by a Governing Council of 13 independent experts, appointed by the Secretary-General for a period of three years.

VI. Conclusion

95. With the diverse, multidimensional, ambitious and cross-cutting nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires a paradigm shift that incorporates the effective, widespread and inclusive application of science, technology and innovation.

96. The convergence of a number of new and emerging technologies provides a wide range of scientific and technical tools to address various dimensions of sustainable development, including food security and sustainable urbanization, in line with national contexts, goals and values. Such scientific and technical applications can benefit from new innovation models that promote inclusion and sustainability, technology assessment and foresight, a gender lens in developing and implementing policy on science, technology and innovation, regional and international cooperation, and financing for innovation.

97. Moreover, innovation strategies to support sustainable development require national capacities to integrate policies on science, technology and innovation into national development plans, statistics and indicators to measure innovation activities and the knowledge economy, capacities in information and communications technology to support inclusive sustainable development applications, and capabilities to harness intellectual property for the diffusion and adaptation of technologies. Furthermore, multilateral cooperation can promote a people-centred, development-oriented information society, strengthen the science-policy interface for sustainable development and support efforts for technology facilitation and capability-building, especially in developing countries and the least developed countries.

United Nations A/72/258

General Assembly

Distr.: General
31 July 2017

Original: English

Seventy-second session
Item 57 of the provisional agenda*

Questions relating to information

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/101 B, provides highlights of recent activities of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, with a particular focus on areas of reference and interest reflected in the resolution and in the deliberations of the Committee on Information at its thirty-ninth session.

* A/72/150.

17-13083 (E) 090817

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 103 of its resolution 71/101 B, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its thirty-ninth session and to the Assembly at its seventy-second session on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of all recommendations and requests contained in that resolution. Accordingly, the Department submitted three reports for consideration by the Committee at its thirty-ninth session, held from 24 April to 5 May 2017 (A/AC.198/2017/2, A/AC.198/2017/3 and A/AC.198/2017/4). The deliberations of the Committee with regard to those reports are reflected in the report of the Committee on its thirty-ninth session (A/72/21).

2. The present report contains updates to the information provided to the Committee on Information at its thirty-ninth session, including a summary of activities undertaken by the Department from March to September 2017 through its three subprogrammes: strategic communications services, news services and outreach and knowledge services.

II. Strategic communications services, including United Nations information centres

A. Peace and security

3. Working closely with the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, the Department of Public Information marked the 2017 International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers on 24 May at United Nations Headquarters under the theme "Investing in peace around the world". The commemoration allowed United Nations information centres to engage with Member States through a range of events, including parades and marches, exhibitions, book fairs, seminars, outreach to schools, multimedia programmes and translation of the Secretary-General's message into local languages for distribution. The United Nations information centre in Dakar, together with the Ministry of Armed Forces and the Association of Friends of Captain Mbaye Diagne, paid tribute to missing peacekeepers with an official ceremony and a subsequent panel discussion. The United Nations information centre in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, hosted a briefing by former Tanzanian peacekeepers for more than 1,300 students. In Bangladesh, the President and Minister for Foreign Affairs joined more than 1,500 attendees at an event honouring fallen and injured peacekeepers, which was co-organized by the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator with support from the United Nations information centre in Dhaka. The United Nations information centre in Kathmandu helped the United Nations country team to create a memorial plaque on the United Nations compound dedicated to fallen Nepalese peacekeepers.

4. The Department, in cooperation with the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support and the Department of Political Affairs, organized a meeting, held in Brindisi, Italy, in June, of the Chiefs of Strategic Communications and Public Information in United Nations peace operations, to share best practices and guidance and carry out a crisis communications simulation exercise.

5. As part of the strategic communications support that the Department of Public Information is providing on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse, the Department launched a system-wide website on the issue in consultation with the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, the Office of the

Special Coordinator on Improving United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and other United Nations entities. It produced advocacy materials for distribution to peace operations and undertook planning for the high-level event on the subject, to be held at Headquarters in September.

6. Communications support was provided to the new Office of Counter-Terrorism, as previously given to the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Office, for raising awareness about the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, and to the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria.

7. The Department, in collaboration with the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, undertook public information assessment missions to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Regarding MINUSTAH, the Department of Public Information met with Mission leadership to map out future communications priorities and strategies as the Mission prepares to close and planning for a new mission, the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti, which will succeed MINUSTAH. Regarding UNMISS, the Department of Public Information met with Mission leadership to explore how to strengthen the Mission's multimedia content and capacity and to better leverage Headquarters support for the Mission.

8. In June, the Department provided wide-ranging coverage of the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, held at Headquarters, across multiple languages and platforms. It also facilitated coverage of the negotiations by external media outlets.

B. Human rights

9. The Department continued its promotion of activities in support of human rights across the United Nations system. To publicize the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024), the Department promoted the Fellowship Programme for People of African Descent of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and produced a short film on descendants of slaves in Portugal.

10. For International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda, the Department worked with the Permanent Mission of Rwanda to the United Nations to organize a memorial ceremony at Headquarters in New York. Commemorative and educational events were arranged by United Nations information centres in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, Lagos, Lusaka, Nairobi, Ouagadougou, Pretoria and Tehran, among others, and the United Nations Information Service in Geneva. As part of the outreach programme on the Rwanda genocide, the Department briefed some 350 New York City middle school students in May and June.

11. For the sixteenth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Department produced a series of background fact sheets in four languages, organized four press conferences and provided broad news coverage of the session in eight languages. It also organized the first-ever indigenous media zone at Headquarters, giving indigenous media a working space to cover the session and amplifying indigenous voices. More than 40 indigenous media representatives used the zone as a workspace, and the panel discussions with experts, streamed live on Facebook, received up to 20,000 views per session.

12. In the lead-up to the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 2018, the Department partnered with the media application company Showbox and the non-governmental organization (NGO) Universal Human Rights Initiative to launch a participatory video campaign encouraging people to record themselves reading an article of the Declaration in their native language, in support of building a corresponding multilingual video collection on the United Nations website.

C. Promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals

13. The Department further leveraged its umbrella campaign "Sustainable Development Goals: 17 Goals to Transform Our World" in all six official languages to raise awareness of the Goals; spur individuals to take action to achieve them; and highlight how Governments, the private sector and civil society are taking concrete steps and making additional commitments to integrate the Goals into their action plans.

14. Partnerships continued to play a crucial role in communicating the Sustainable Development Goals in a way that reached the widest possible global audience. The "SDGs in action" app, created in collaboration with the GSM Association, was launched in several official languages and was promoted at key events, including the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain, and the Economic and Social Council high-level political forum on sustainable development in New York.

15. In April, as part of the Common Ground initiative bringing together the world's six largest advertising holding companies in support of the Sustainable Development Goals, a three-day "rapid innovation workshop" was held at Google offices in New York, with substantive content and on-site assistance provided by the Department.

16. United Nations information centres also continued to engage in strategic partnerships to amplify United Nations messages and promote a better understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations information centre in Buenos Aires collaborated with Argentina's Ministry of Education to disseminate United Nations materials through Educ.ar, an online platform used by teachers that receives 1.3 million visitors. The United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe, in Brussels, worked with the social enterprise Sparknews to promote the Sustainable Development Goals through content in leading newspapers.

D. Special information programme on the question of Palestine

17. In collaboration with the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Public Information provided outreach and communications support for the United Nations Forum to Mark Fifty Years of Occupation, organized under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and held at the United Nations in New York on 29 and 30 June. The Department produced short videos showcasing daily Palestinian life for United Nations events and further dissemination via social media. It also updated the content of the permanent exhibit on the question of Palestine at Headquarters.

E. New Partnership for Africa's Development

18. The Department continued to raise global awareness of and support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development through its magazine *Africa Renewal/Afrique Renouveau* and the *Africa Renewal* website, in both English and French. During the reporting period, the Department produced issues on partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals and on life underwater. Between March and June, the Department also placed 19 magazine news features in English and French, which were republished 366 times, in 193 media outlets from 36 countries.

19. The Department continued to work closely with the African Union to raise public awareness of the latter's Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

F. Ocean Conference

20. The Department promoted the Ocean Conference, held in New York from 5 to 9 June, by providing a comprehensive communications package with key messages, backgrounders, videos and photos along with the Conference logo in all six official languages and branding for key Conference locations. A press kit and social media package were produced prior to the Conference, and the Conference and related issues were promoted through United Nations information centres. A dedicated website in the six official languages was created and the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth supported an interactive workshop on young people and oceans. A special double issue of *UN Chronicle*, under the theme "Our Ocean, Our World," was published ahead of the Conference. A screening of the award-winning documentary *Chasing Coral* was held, followed by a discussion on the impact of climate change on ocean life. United Nations Messengers of Peace Leonardo DiCaprio and Lang Lang recorded video messages in support of the Ocean Conference, with the former's video garnering more than 40,000 views. The Department organized daily briefings, and the #SaveOurOcean hashtag was widely promoted by the United Nations system, Member States and other partners and featured in more than 126,000 tweets from 1 to 11 June, with a potential reach of 269 million social media users.

21. Under the partnership among the Department of Public Information, the United Nations Foundation, the Office of the President of the General Assembly and the non-profit media organization PVBLIC Foundation, a Sustainable Development Goal media zone was organized at Headquarters, which became a hub for conversations on the oceans with a diverse mix of high-level officials, experts, celebrities, artists and other advocates. Sessions were live-streamed on United Nations WebTV and further distributed through social media platforms. In addition, the Department of Public Information promoted World Environment Day and World Oceans Day, both of which took place during the Conference.

22. United Nations information centres, together with local media outlets, joined two press conferences via WebEx from Headquarters in New York to prepare for the Conference. Offered in English and in French, the briefings generated considerable media coverage. The information centres also encouraged local communities to participate in activities promoting the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources. The United Nations information centre in Cairo worked with a team of divers to clean up part of the harbour of Alexandria. The United Nations Office in Minsk launched a mobile museum-laboratory for teaching purposes. The United Nations information centre in Lagos organized a seafood

cooking contest and an exhibition of products made from recycled marine debris. Several United Nations information centres organized beach clean-up activities and invited young people to learn about conservation.

G. Together initiative

23. The Department of Public Information continued to coordinate the Together initiative to counter xenophobia and discrimination and to act as its focal point for Member States, the private sector and civil society. Engaging in a series of strategic partnerships, including with leading global NGOs on migration, with Member States and with private sector companies working pro bono, the Department produced and promoted original content through online and social media platforms featuring United Nations Messengers of Peace Yo-Yo Ma and Lang Lang, sports celebrities, mayors and members of host communities, as well as refugees and migrants. Selected United Nations information centres implemented more than 100 Together-branded events. These included journalist workshops in Lebanon and South Africa on how to communicate about migration without stereotyping; and lectures in schools, sports events, youth activities and movie screenings focused on migration in Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain and Switzerland.

H. High-level political forum on sustainable development

24. For the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July, the Department of Public Information produced a comprehensive press kit and social media package in all six official languages, which it provided to United Nations information centres and the broader United Nations system. The Department also produced material highlighting the 44 countries that presented their voluntary national reviews of progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

I. Strengthening United Nations information centres

25. The Department continued its regular use of WebEx briefings to provide United Nations information centres with guidance on programmatic and administrative matters. In particular, it provided continuous support to the information centres in Cairo, Mexico City, Pretoria and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil through briefings to strengthen their capacity to promote the work of the United Nations to local audiences as well as their own work with local United Nations country teams. Through more frequent interactions, the Department encouraged stronger information and experience-sharing among United Nations information centres, which led to more joint activities and greater social media reach and burden-sharing regarding translations. The information centres were encouraged to share knowledge and experience, which led to more joint activities concerning, for example, the Sustainable Development Goals, ocean conservation and migration and refugee issues.

26. An in-person workshop in Mexico City in July strengthened the administrative network among United Nations information centres in Latin America, promoted regional cooperation and prepared for the anticipated deployment of Umoja across all information centres in the region before the end of 2017.

27. To provide additional and timely support, directors of larger United Nations information centres are playing a greater coordination role with respect to the operations of smaller information centres in their region or time zone.

28. A redesigned United Nations information centre website built on the centrally supported Unite Web platform and employing the branding, multilingualism, accessibility, responsiveness and security standards of the main United Nations website is in the final phases of development. A project is also under way to set up a website-hosting environment for local United Nations information centre websites that is built upon an enterprise back-end maintained and supported by the Office of Information and Communications Technology.

J. Supporting United Nations country teams

29. Using their knowledge of the local media landscape and their experience in translating United Nations messages for local audiences, United Nations information centres supported joint communications, helped to draft communications strategies and assisted in communicating about the implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

30. With the United Nations country team in Cameroon, the United Nations information centre in Yaoundé mobilized the media to cover the launch of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2018-2020. The United Nations information centre in Harare helped United Nations system offices in Zimbabwe to engage with the local media on a joint action plan to strengthen press coverage of development and humanitarian issues. The information centre in Windhoek worked with United Nations agencies to promote a national road safety campaign, and the information centre in Antananarivo collaborated with the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, the Government and journalists on a conference about the media's role in advancing peaceful, just and inclusive societies. The United Nations information centre in Bogotá and United Nations agencies in Colombia launched a national campaign to encourage action on oceans and the Sustainable Development Goals. The information centre in New Delhi and the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator worked together on a series of communications activities, including materials explaining the relationship between the United Nations and India.

K. Multilingualism

31. The network of United Nations information centres continues to use local languages to communicate widely and effectively with local audiences on the work of the United Nations. The information centres carry out activities in five of the six official languages while producing, translating and disseminating United Nations information materials in at least 68 languages. On a weekly, monthly, bimonthly or quarterly basis, United Nations information centres produce newsletters in 11 languages. They also use local languages on digital and social media platforms, maintaining 31 websites and 15 Facebook, 19 Twitter and eight YouTube accounts with content available in those local languages.

32. United Nations information centres translated the Sustainable Development Goals into Hausa, Tamazight, Twi and Yoruba, bringing the number of languages in which the Goals are currently available to at least 50.

33. The United Nations information centre in Lagos is working with the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria to produce United Nations Radio programmes in

Hausa and Yoruba, to provide United Nations-related information to some 120 million people speaking those languages.

L. Youth

34. Young people remain a vital partner and target audience for United Nations information centres, particularly when organizing activities to promote the Sustainable Development Goals or coordinating Model United Nations to learn about the work and structure of the Organization.

35. During a "Youth 4 Global Goals" event, the United Nations information centre in Tunis collaborated with a large youth organization, AIESEC, to promote youth participation in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations information centre in Rio de Janeiro supported a Model United Nations event for German-speaking schoolchildren in which 2,000 students from Brazil and other countries participated.

36. The United Nations information centre in Warsaw organized the third edition of its annual Blue Peace March to promote human rights and peace. Attracting some 400 participants, the 2017 march emphasized youth outreach and included performing arts events by young people and a social media campaign that engaged primary school and middle school students across Poland.

M. Crisis communications

37. In June, the Department provided an updated version of the United Nations Communications Group standard operating procedure for how to communicate in a crisis. It details both the procedures to follow and the organizational structures that should be in place, for effective coordination across the United Nations system both in countries and at Headquarters for dealing with crises in the field and at Headquarters.

III. News services

A. Social media

38. The Department undertook steps to realign resources and create a multilingual social media team to develop and carry out its overall social media strategy. The team will coordinate planning, branding and the promotion of social media content and also coordinate Secretariat and United Nations system social media efforts, including liaison with Member States. The Department's multilingual social media accounts continued to see steady growth, gaining 1.7 million news fans/followers between January and June across major platforms. In recognition of the widespread increase of the digital sphere as a global hub of news and information, the Department has been renewing its strategies to improve language parity and enhancing outreach to diverse demographics and audiences. It has been working to improve the coordination of its multilingual social media accounts, with multimedia content being shared across platforms. The Department has also been engaging with Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Weibo and other platforms on how to maximize outreach and impact within existing resources.

39. The Department has been working closely in its multilingual social media accounts with counterparts across the United Nations system to amplify messages and raise awareness of complex and pressing issues, including the Sustainable

Development Goals; climate change and disaster resilience; peace and security; human rights; counter-terrorism; famine and food security; humanitarian crises in the Niger, north-east Nigeria, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen; and migration.

40. The Department mobilized coordination across the United Nations system to work towards a harmonized One UN approach. Global campaign materials are being shared on social media platforms, including for the Together campaign, which has reached an estimated 43 million people on Twitter to date in 2017.

B. Web and digital

41. The audience of the central pillar of the United Nations online presence, the macro website www.un.org, continues to grow in response to new and revised content on the work of the Organization in the six official languages and in formats that comply with accessibility requirements.

42. During the period from March through May, the number of unique users increased by 300,000. The most-viewed language is English, with 6.5 million unique users over the period — almost 50 per cent of the total audience. The second most-viewed site is Spanish, with some 4.3 million unique users during the same period — more than a quarter of the total audience.

Figure I
Unique users

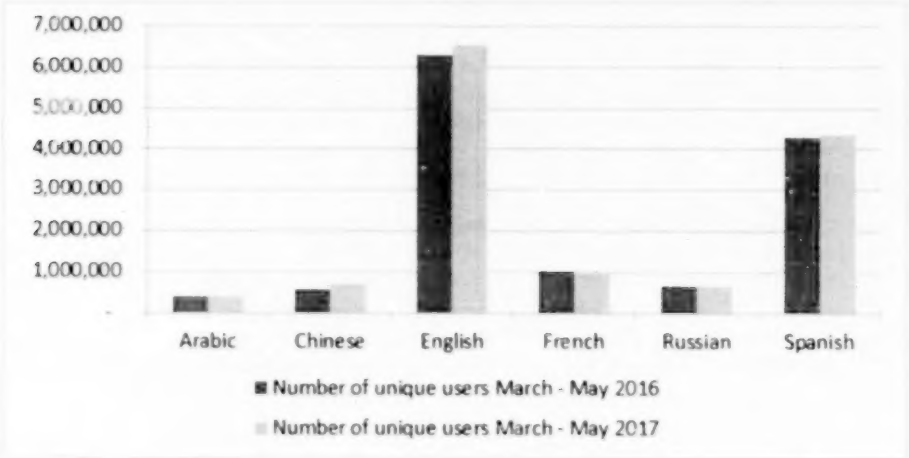
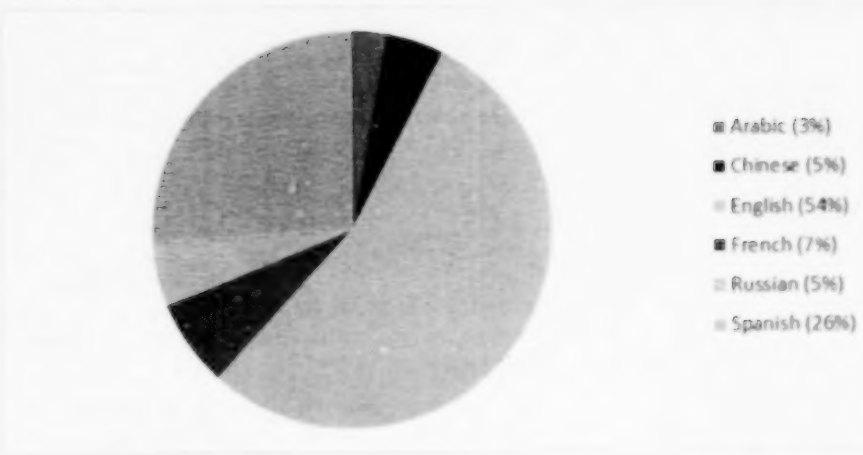


Figure II
Total page views



43. The Department designed and launched a number of important new multilingual websites during the reporting period. These included the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre website, available in the six official languages, outlining the Organization's work on the subject, as well as key themes and priorities, and featuring key documents, including the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and the plan of action to prevent violent extremism, along with a support portal for victims of terrorism; the interactive multimedia website "The Essential UN", offering facts, figures and explanations of the structure and operations of the United Nations; and a redesigned legacy website on the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine, providing users with access to an extensive collection of documents with the design, format and functionality of other official United Nations sites.

44. The Department has been focusing on developing and updating websites for United Nations observances in all six official languages, which are among the most visited online pages. During the reporting period, new sites were added for International Asteroid Day; Sustainable Gastronomy Day; International Day of the Tropics; International Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day; Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Day; and Time of Remembrance and Reconciliation for Those Who Lost Their Lives during the Second World War.

45. To further raise awareness of and increase media engagement on United Nations observances, the Department has begun consolidating information on multimedia features produced for the Days, including broadcast-quality versions of the Secretary-General's video messages and emailing to broadcast partners and other subscribers in advance to increase coverage.

46. Lastly, the Department has updated the two apps "UN News Reader" and "UN Audio Channels", upgrading the former — already the most downloaded United Nations app — for iOS and Android devices and making the latter more robust through the inclusion of social media complementing live audio feeds and feature podcasts, which has proved popular with journalists covering events at Headquarters.

C. United Nations News Centre

47. The United Nations News Centre moved towards the launch of an integrated multimedia website making news and features in audio, video, print and photo available to viewers and radio partners in a single online news hub, as well as dispatched via e-mail. This represents a continuation of efforts to broaden the reach of United Nations messaging and provide clear and factual information on complex and sensitive subjects to diverse demographics across languages and regions to meet the demands of news consumers. For example, explainer videos were created on the United Nations response to sexual abuse and exploitation and on the subjects of peacekeeping and female genital mutilation.

48. The English Unit of the United Nations News Centre continues to be the catalyst in the production of content for diverse audiences, providing in-depth features and human stories addressing complex themes, with related video content adapted in other languages. Examples include reporting from conferences and from the field, such as the Uganda Refugee Solidarity Summit in June, commemorative themes such as the seventieth anniversary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and contributions made by peacekeeping, including the drawdown of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire. The English Unit spearheaded the Department's push into podcasting, addressing topics such as sexual violence during conflict, counter-terrorism efforts and the Sustainable Development Goals.

49. The Chinese Unit of the United Nations News Centre strengthened its partnerships with China's flagship radio stations, including China National Radio, China Radio International, Radio Beijing and Radio Shanghai. With their support, including frequent end-to-end live link-ups between the Chinese Unit and China National Radio, United Nations information reaches millions of Chinese-speaking audiences both in China and around the world. As an instance of leveraging the power of celebrity to raise awareness, a video interview with the young Chinese singer Wang Yuan attending the 2017 Economic and Social Council Youth Forum attracted some 6 million views on Weibo's Miaopai platform.

50. The French Unit of the United Nations News Centre stepped up efforts to reach out to young people, partnering with Eco-radio, a web-based radio network in France affiliated with the Associated Schools Project Network programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which focuses on education for sustainable development and global citizenship. The French Unit is cultivating more youth-oriented partnerships through a regular video news bulletin targeting younger audiences, its programming focuses on important peacekeeping messaging for the francophone world, the situation in Burundi, human rights and sustainable development. In March, the French Unit gathered a total of 1.36 million impressions — 30 times more than in the same period the previous year.

51. The Russian Unit of the United Nations News Centre continued its efforts to reach larger audiences worldwide by introducing innovative products such as News-in-Brief and News Alerts for radio station partners and through enhanced multimedia productions for the United Nations News Centre portal. Regional cooperation was also boosted through close cooperation with, for example, United Nations offices in Kyiv, Minsk and Moscow. Related social media platforms have been steadily increasing in popularity. For example, during the reporting period, the number of Facebook followers tripled; those of the audio productions on SoundCloud quadrupled; and the number of Twitter followers grew by 50 per cent.

52. Coverage of issues on the United Nations agenda by the Arabic Unit of the United Nations News Centre has made it a reliable source of information for diverse audiences, including influencers such as politicians and celebrities. Its videos have garnered thousands of views and retweets. Regular features have spotlighted the work of the United Nations system in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and across the Middle East, as did its interview with Muzoon Almellehan, the first refugee to become a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Goodwill Ambassador.

53. The Spanish Unit of the United Nations News Centre produced coverage tailored to increasing audiences, with in-depth coverage of regional issues, including the peace process in Colombia and topics such as natural disasters, indigenous issues and human rights. Social media successes included a tweet about the designation of the President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, as a United Nations "Honorary Gender Champion", which gathered more than 126,000 impressions and more than 1,000 retweets; and a Facebook video about an indigenous Mexican activist, which reached 160,000 people and had at least 48,400 views. Efforts are under way to expand partnerships with platforms such as Huffington Post Spain and National Radio of Spain.

54. The Kiswahili Unit of the United Nations News Centre welcomed six new radio station partners, from Kenya, Somalia, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, during the reporting period. Facebook live-streaming has become one of the most popular elements of daily programming, with 234,000 followers compared with 76,000 a year ago. Multimedia products are disseminated by United Nations information centres in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania and Nairobi, while field partnerships with UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women have resulted in multimedia products that cater to the region. The Kiswahili Unit conducted a series of interviews during the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in March, and published field-based stories from Burundi and Uganda on the real life of women refugees in the camps. The plight of refugees in East and Central Africa was a focus of news stories, with the situation in Burundi routinely drawing major coverage.

55. The Portuguese Unit of the United Nations News Centre continued to be a primary source of information about the United Nations for Portuguese-speaking nations, and its short videos and adaptations into Portuguese for social media attracted new audiences. The Secretary-General's video on International Women's Day achieved more than 334,000 views, 3,900 reactions on social media and a reach of 1.2 million people. New partners included TV Cabo Verde, which airs the new daily video *Destaque ONU News* in prime time; Nova Escola, an educational website in Brazil with 1.1 million followers; TV Zimbo of Angola; and *Globo Rural* magazine. Facebook Live has increased its followers by 70 per cent since September 2016.

D. Press and meetings services

56. Between March and September, the Meetings Coverage Section produced close to 2,100 press releases in English and French. Almost a third of that output consisted of summaries of the meetings of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as of their subsidiary bodies and substantive commissions. More than 1,100 press releases included statements, remarks and messages from the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General and material from other United Nations offices and departments.

57. The Media Liaison and Accreditation Unit processed more than 1,200 accreditation requests at Headquarters in New York and took steps to process thousands more for the high-level period of the General Assembly in September. From March through May, the Unit provided information and logistical assistance to approximately 2,000 journalists at stakeouts and press briefings. In an effort to garner increased coverage, the Unit regularly alerts members of the press and other partners, including its 38,000 Twitter followers, to United Nations activities at Headquarters and the release of critical documents. In advance of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, the Unit expects to process between 2,500 and 3,500 requests for accreditation during the high-level period.

58. The Department's webcast services, which bring live and on-demand video coverage of United Nations meetings and events to a global audience, sought ways to improve and expand its products. The United Nations Web TV website has been broadcasting live General Assembly plenary meetings and Security Council meetings in the six official languages and providing corresponding on-demand videos of the events. The webcast team has also updated the website to facilitate the search for multilingual videos and enable a mobile-friendly presentation. Webcast services had some 13 million video views during the reporting period.

E. Video, television and photo

59. The monthly flagship programme *21st Century*, now in its tenth year of production, airs on major global broadcast and social media platforms. The French version, *21ème Siècle*, continues to be hosted by internationally acclaimed singer-songwriter Angelique Kidjo. The Chinese version is also entering its fifth year of production.

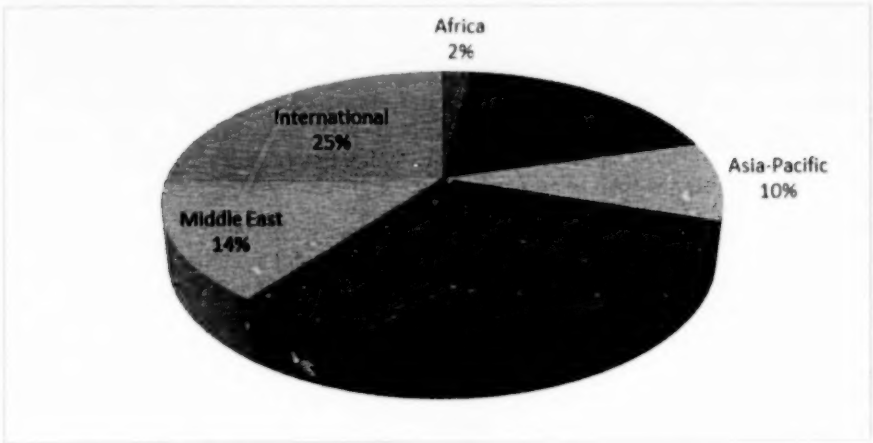
60. Recent episodes of the show marked International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers and the Ocean Conference and an August episode focused on refugees and migrants, including the successful integration of migrants from the Syrian Arab Republic and Afghanistan into Germany.

61. The Department stepped up its creation of videos for social media, aimed at engaging audiences around commemorative days and priority United Nations themes. The videos, often produced in eight languages (six official, plus Portuguese and Kiswahili) and incorporating messages from the Secretary-General, have highlighted International Women's Day, International Day of Sport and Development for Peace, International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers and World Environment Day. Two short videos were also created for World Refugee Day and International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

62. The *UN In Action* series continues to share stories in the six official languages, flagging the work of the United Nations around the world, for example, in stories on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender homeless youth in New York; the famine response in South Sudan; and the rebuilding of a war-torn community in Colombia.

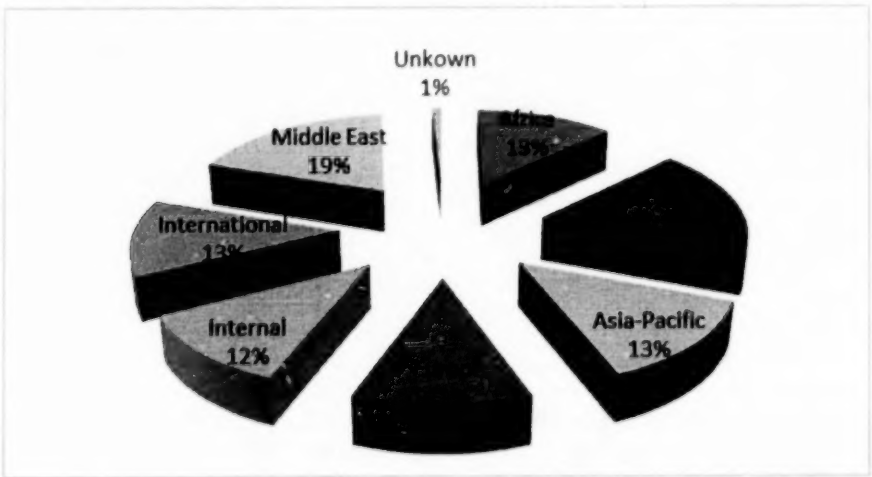
63. The Department's UNifeed remains the go-to place for broadcasters that need video footage related to the work of the United Nations and its agencies, both at Headquarters and in the field. Clients can access video news packages either by downloading the material via the UNifeed website or via major news organizations that have been long-time partners, such as AP, Reuters TV and Eurovision. Some 500 broadcast users are expected to have made about 8,000 downloads per month over the reporting period, and plans are in place to continue building the client base. Meanwhile, the Teletrax monitoring system shows that television stations around the world aired UNifeed packages, or parts of them, more than 25,000 times during the same period, reaching millions of viewers.

Figure III
UNifeed on air, as monitored by Teletrax



Note: Teletrax monitoring is limited in Africa.

Figure IV
UNifeed downloads by region



64. The United Nations Photo Library continued to handle a large number of requests from Member States, the media, publishers and the general public. During the reporting period, the Photo Library responded to more than 4,000 requests and distributed 110,000 high-resolution photographs. The United Nations Photo Facebook page garnered at least 100,000 likes, with a monthly reach of around 40,000. The United Nations Photo Twitter page has 82,000 followers, achieving an average of 12,000 impressions a day. The Flickr account has 35 million accumulated views, compared with 26 million one year ago.

65. The Department moved forward on digitizing the United Nations historic audiovisual collection, made possible through a donation by the Government of Oman. To date, 10,000 audiovisual records have been entered into the digital database system; 5,300 records have been verified by professional archivists; and 1,200 video and film tapes have been digitized. Among the processed archival

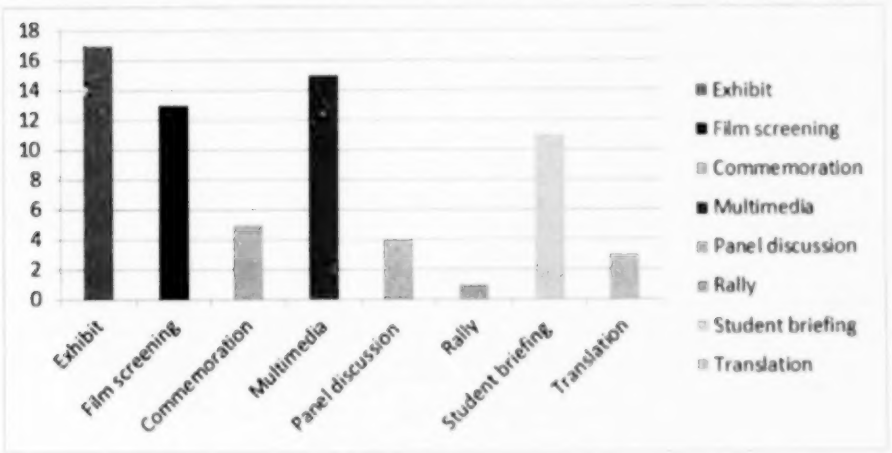
materials, some 700 items have been posted on the Audiovisual Library website to date.

IV. Outreach and knowledge services

A. Education outreach

66. As part of the observance of International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the Remember Slavery programme of the Department of Public Information mounted an exhibit, "A legacy of black achievement," at Headquarters in March. The Department also partnered with the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network and The Links, Incorporated to hold the annual global student videoconference in May under the theme "Recognizing the legacy and contributions of people of African descent". United Nations information centres organized nearly 70 related educational activities in 20 countries.

Figure V
United Nations information centre "Remember Slavery" activities



67. In partnership with the Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations, the Austrian Cultural Forum, the New York City Department of Education, Facing History and Ourselves and the Hold onto Your Music Foundation, the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme of the Department of Public Information brought together 450 middle school and high school students and their teachers for a multimedia presentation on *The Children of Willesden Lane* at Headquarters in April.

B. Youth and educational outreach

68. In collaboration with Ambassadors to the United Nations, the Department of Public Information organized a training session on the "UN4MUN" approach to Model United Nations, held in London in April, which was attended by 35 student leaders and advisers from 22 countries.

69. The Department also produced, in all six official languages, an animated video on the story of Yusra Mardini, a young Syrian refugee, in support of World Refugee Day and the Together initiative, and another on young Rohingya refugees.

70. Ahead of International Day of Peace, the student observance "Together for peace: respect, safety and dignity for all" was held at Headquarters. A related website, print materials and animated videos were made available in all six official languages.

C. United Nations Academic Impact initiative

71. The United Nations Academic Impact initiative continued its outreach to higher education institutes and research associations by collaborating with academic partners to organize interactive panel discussions among researchers, civil society practitioners and United Nations officials in April and June on the theme "Unlearning intolerance: perspectives from 2017", which explored means of preventing manifestations of violent extremism, and national and international perspectives on global citizenship, as well as another in July on the United Nations approach to human security.

72. Also in July, the United Nations Academic Impact initiative, in association with ELS Educational Services, concluded the fourth annual "Many languages, one world" international essay contest for college and university students. The theme for 2017 focused on the role of multilingualism in fostering global citizenship and cultural understanding. Students were asked to write an essay on the topic in a United Nations official language that was neither their mother tongue nor their primary language of instruction. More than 6,000 participants from 1,900 universities in 170 countries took part. A total of 60 winners attended a multilingual Global Youth Forum culminating in an event in the General Assembly Hall in July in which students presented action plans for achieving selected Sustainable Development Goals.

73. The United Nations Academic Impact initiative published a number of academic articles on its website on related issues, including a series on women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics; young people in Africa; traditional medicine; reconciliation in post-conflict Rwanda; and sustainable tourism.

D. Engagement with youth

74. In mid-July, the newly appointed Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, Jayathma Wickramanayake, who has a track record of advocacy in Sri Lanka, started her duties with respect to encouraging youth engagement in the work of the United Nations.

75. In May, in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations and the Major Group for Children and Youth, the Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth organized the side event "Launching a vision for youth in science, technology and innovation at the United Nations and beyond" at the second annual multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals.

76. World Youth Skills Day, held on 17 July under the theme "Skills for the future of work", provided an opportunity for representatives of Member States, the United Nations system, the private sector, civil society and youth organizations to share lessons learned and best practices on strategies to address future skills needs.

77. The Office also co-organized, together with the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme, the Major Group for Children and Youth and the Restless Development agency, an

event, held on 19 July during the high-level political forum on sustainable development, that showcased how young people are engaging in voluntary national review processes.

78. International Youth Day, whose theme was "Youth building peace", was commemorated with an event at Headquarters in New York on 11 August.

E. Sales and marketing

79. The United Nations iLibrary (un-ilibrary.org) has grown to contain more than 3,500 titles, of which half are in languages other than English. The iLibrary, which allows fully searchable access to view aggregated United Nations content, has also expanded its content to include working papers and databases.

80. The e-commerce platform shop.un.org promotes new publications in connection with United Nations priorities such as the Sustainable Development Goals, peace, climate change, gender, migration and special events such as the Ocean Conference.

81. United Nations Development Business, a subscription-based online publication for procurement announcements for development projects, continued to focus on encouraging inclusive supply chains, in particular through facilitating knowledge-sharing on gender-responsive procurement and improving access by African and Asian companies to global public procurement.

F. Publications and editorial

82. An issue of *UN Chronicle* on human rights was published in March in recognition of the fiftieth anniversary of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. A forthcoming issue examines the issue of prevention of conflicts and crises.

83. In May, the Department published, for the first time in colour, a new edition of *Basic Facts about the United Nations* in English, updated with details about the Organization's global activities since 2014. Work has begun by United Nations Academic Impact member institution Shanghai International Studies University on translating the book into Chinese, and arrangements are being explored with the United Arab Emirates for an Arabic edition.

84. *UN Chronicle* is published in all six official languages, with Chinese produced in partnership with Shanghai International Studies University. The online-only Yearbook Express, featuring summarized content from the *Yearbook of the United Nations*, has continued to expand its availability in all official languages to previous issues as well as the most recent volume of the *Yearbook*, at no cost to the Organization — the Chinese edition being produced in collaboration with United Nations Academic Impact member institution Soochow University.

G. Dag Hammarskjöld Library

85. Services to Library stakeholders and clients continued to expand. The online knowledge base, Ask Dag, (ask.un.org) has grown to some 50,000 views per month. More than 2,000 research requests from permanent missions were filled, and specialized training was delivered to more than 325 delegates. The Library conducted more than 70 recurring training sessions on Library resources to some 600 participants.

86. Since March, the Library has published 10 multilingual research guides, including on youth and sustainable development; the Ocean Conference and Sustainable Development Goal 14; teaching the Sustainable Development Goals; United Nations documentation for the Trusteeship Council; and, in Arabic, human rights, peacekeeping, disarmament, environment and law.

87. The launch of the United Nations Digital Library made more than 800,000 United Nations documents, votes, speeches and open access publications freely available online.

88. Some 12,366 United Nations documents (representing 155,340 pages and 700 maps) were digitized and uploaded to the Official Documents System and the United Nations Digital Library. The reports of the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), as well as those of the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization Committee), were completely digitized.

89. In addition, 4,741 metadata records were created and assigned to United Nations documents and publications to improve ease of search and retrieval and more than 19,667 speeches relating to agenda items of the three main deliberative organs were indexed.

H. Non-governmental organizations, advocacy and special events

90. The Department focused on multi-directional partnerships with 1,465 associated NGOs aimed at building support for United Nations priorities. In partnership with the Executive Committee of NGOs Associated with the Department of Public Information, the Department organized the event "Intergenerational dialogues on the Sustainable Development Goals", held at Headquarters on 1 August.

91. In March, on the occasion of World Down Syndrome Day, the Department facilitated filming at Headquarters for the award-winning United States documentary/reality television series *Born This Way*, which follows the lives of young adults with Down Syndrome and, in May, for a segment of the Israeli version of the reality television show *The Amazing Race* promoting the values of multiculturalism and multilingualism.

92. During the Ocean Conference, the Department facilitated filming for a project, sponsored by the Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Academy and supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, to be presented as a video installation at the Venice Art, Architecture and Film Biennales. In April, the Secretary-General designated the Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai as a United Nations Messenger of Peace, with a special focus on girls' education. United Nations Messengers of Peace Leonardo DiCaprio and Lang Lang recorded video messages in support of the Ocean Conference, with the former's video garnering more than 40,000 views. In addition, Mr. DiCaprio and the United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for Biodiversity, Edward Norton, each authored an article for the *UN Chronicle* special issue related to the Conference. Social media content from United Nations Messengers of Peace Jane Goodall, Mr. Lang and Mr. Ma also promoted the 100-day countdown to the International Day of Peace.

93. The United Nations observance of World Autism Awareness Day focused on the rights of persons with autism to individual autonomy and legal capacity as called for by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A United

Nations Headquarters event attracted a capacity audience in person and was also live-streamed on Facebook to more than 100,000 people. For International Day of Happiness, in March, the Department of Public Information partnered with UNICEF, the United Nations Foundation and Sony Pictures to promote the Sustainable Development Goals through the movie *Smurfs: The Lost Village*. The campaign highlighted how the Goals can create a happier world and featured an event at Headquarters attended by the movie's stars and featuring Model United Nations students. The event was covered by 180 press articles and on 104 television news broadcasts, and the wider digital campaign reached an estimated 137 million users.

94. In March, the Department of Public Information assisted the Permanent Mission of Haiti to the United Nations in arranging a screening of the documentary *Cassures: Nos familles entre Haïti et ailleurs*, which was followed by a conversation about migration with the filmmaker and expert guests.

I. Visitors' services

95. Some 15 journalists from countries with developing economies and economies in transition participated in the annual Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists Fellowship Programme, which ran from 10 to 30 September.

96. The Speakers Bureau arranged for groups to be briefed by United Nations officials on a wide range of topics. Briefing programmes reached more than 22,000 people, primarily students. Groups were briefed in all six official languages, as well as in German, Italian, Japanese and Korean, at Headquarters, through Skype and at other locations. The UN4U outreach activity enabled United Nations officials to travel to elementary, middle and high schools in New York City and in other neighbouring communities to educate some 1,500 young people about the work of the Organization.

97. Guided tours of one hour about the work of the Organization, conducted in the six official languages, as well as in German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese and Turkish, were taken by some 165,000 visitors.

98. An interactive space for children opened at Headquarters in July, featuring audiovisual materials and activities encouraging children to learn about the institution.

J. United Nations intranet (iSeek) and deleGATE

99. More than 350 stories in English and French and more than 550 global and local announcements on key management issues and United Nations events and initiatives were posted on the United Nations intranet, iSeek, and deleGATE sites during the reporting period.

100. iSeek has fully integrated additional local intranets (for example, the ESCWA intranet to iSeek Beirut and the United Nations Office at Geneva intranet to iSeek Geneva) and has initiated talks with other local intranets, in particular with the United Nations Office at Nairobi and other parts of the Secretariat (for example, the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support and the Office of Human Resources Management), about possible convergence. Work on migrating deleGATE to the iSeek platform is ongoing.

K. Graphic Design Unit

101. The Graphic Design Unit continued to support Secretariat departments and United Nations information centres by providing visual communication and graphic design solutions for global and internal public information campaigns, conferences and publications, including multilingual design services for the Ocean Conference, several General Assembly high-level thematic debates, the tenth anniversary of the Human Rights Council, the Together initiative and the United Nations World Data Forum.

V. Deepening a culture of evaluation

102. The Department maintained its commitment to a culture of evaluation with the objective of enhancing the effectiveness of its products and activities. The Evaluation and Communications Research Unit conducts evaluations for the Department and provides technical support to programme managers in carrying out their own self-assessments. In 2017, the Department is undertaking two evaluations: one focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women and the other on the Department's work relating to partnerships. In support of the gender strategy adopted by the Department in 2016, the former evaluation is analysing its communications products and services with a view to assessing the Department's contribution to gender equality and the empowerment of women. The latter evaluation will focus on youth-oriented partnerships.

103. The Evaluation and Communications Research Unit is tracking metrics for monitoring and reporting purposes, including traditional news media, social media and website performance. In support of the communications work related to the Ocean Conference, the Unit conducted a media monitoring and analysis project in collaboration with United Nations information centres, covering media in 70 countries. The analysis focused on the news coverage of the Conference and the ability of the United Nations to promote the coverage of key messages, topics and spokespersons. Initial findings indicate that the pickup of key United Nations messages was strong, with more than four out of every five stories carrying at least one message and a United Nations official being quoted in more than a third of the articles. The analysis also covered social media outcomes, specifically on the use of the hashtag #saveourocean, which was used widely by the Department of Public Information and United Nations partners to spread awareness of the Conference's goals and messages.

VI. Conclusion

104. The Department is implementing changes to ensure that United Nations communications are relevant, strategic and accessible by aligning its outputs and adjusting its use of resources to meet the challenges posed by the rapidly changing media landscape. Communicating in languages and in formats that are readily understood remains the core mission of the Department, as defined and refined by the ever-accelerating pace of technology. Social media, which offers an immediate way to engage global audiences about the work and goals of the United Nations, is becoming increasingly important. A rapid realignment of functions within the Department in July and August offered workable opportunities to dramatically expand outreach through those media in both languages and content.

105. The Department will continue to work with Member States and a broad array of partners across multiple platforms in as many languages as possible to promote global awareness and understanding of the activities and concerns on the United Nations agenda.